Tourism and Conservation in Southern Costa Rica

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of tourism as a tool for sustainable development. It focuses on a rural area in Southern Costa Rica that encompasses the Las Nubes Biological Reserve, Los Cusingos Neotropical Bird Sanctuary, the biological corridor within the watershed located between the two reserves and the surrounding region.

It is argued that a unique model for sustainable tourism does not exist as such, but that similar sets of principles exist for each successful example of sustainable tourism and that each particular destination should accommodate these principles according to its unique features. Thus, this paper describes the region of study, presents the research methodology and results obtained from an informal survey. In the interviews stakeholders revealed their degree of interest to integrate tourism as an alternative activity to support the conservation of the natural environments and their resources.

It is further argued that meeting tourists’ preferences plays a critical role for the sustainability of destinations; the results of a survey carried out in Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve are presented as a comparative model to be followed in terms of visitors’ satisfaction.

The principal conclusion is that sustainable tourism in the region has potential to improve the economic well-being of local communities while supporting the conservation of biodiversity and other ecosystem functions.
Acknowledgements

This journey of an incredible adventure has finally come to an end… in it, many people have guided and accompanied me in many special ways…

It would be impossible to mention them all, but I am particularly thankful to the following:

Mami: Por rescatarme y apoyarme durante todo el camino
Papi: Por tu apoyo incondicional y por todas aquellas platicas sobre el futuro…

A mis amigos en la distancia… por permanecer ahí…

Howard, for being much more than an academic advisor

Christos, for his unconditional and unlimited support and help at all times, a true friend.

Bryn Greer-Wooten, Paul Wilkinson and Lyda for their time and invaluable advice.

Adrian, for rescuing my paper so many times

In Costa Rica:

A mi Tia Vera por tanta dulceura, a Julio Calvo, Sonia y al equipo del CCT ; a la gente de Santa Elena y Quizarrá particularmente a Eden Chinchilla y Lizbeth Guzman; a Luis Angel Rojas, Carmen y familia, por su ayuda incondicional, por las charlas compartidas y por los buenos ratos, a Gilberth Fallas, Walter Odio, Noel Ureña, y Alberto Salas por su tiempo, sus ideas y comentarios.

And finally to Linda, Laura, Rena, and Paul for giving friendship a new meaning.
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Foreword

I entered the Faculty of Environmental Studies without an awareness or understanding of many of the problems that the world is facing today. Although I do not believe that I will ever be able to understand the reason for them, today, I am a different person; someone who is sensitive to the choices I make and the effect that these will have. My undergraduate degree in Hotel Management and my working experience in event planning provided me with skills that are useful in the everyday life, however studying at FES has given me much more than just working skills; it has opened my eyes to a real world.

The language barrier was never as difficult to overcome as the need for a science background for a better understanding of topics such as conservation and ecology. Today, more than ever, I want to continue learning to better understand the implications of my actions. With this same philosophy, I made the decision to travel to Costa Rica in an effort to bring together my previous knowledge and experience with what I had learned at FES.

This Major Paper fulfills one of the requirements for my MES degree; it is focused on the integration of recreational activities and conservation of biodiversity. Several of the learning objectives established in my Plan of Study were central during this research—to identify tourism’s potential contribution to sustainable development at the community level and to identify risks and benefits of tourism development in sensitive areas. The time spent in Costa Rica for this research paper, allowed me to experience a real life situation like the ones I had read so much about in the past. This
experience taught me a variety of things, including the awareness of how much is yet to be learnt and done. The fond memories will always remain with me.
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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between tourism and its surrounding environment has been widely discussed by academics from multiple fields of study. Most authors and researchers agree on the importance of protecting the natural, cultural, and historical features that provide tourism with its existence. By safeguarding the environment and its natural beauty from the self-destructive process in which tourism can fall, will provide long-term viability of tourism at any location (Cater E., Manning, Dougherty, 1995). In recent years, the notion of “eco-tourism”, “nature tourism” and “sustainable tourism” have surfaced as a means of economic development while financing natural resources conservation efforts. For many, ecotourism exemplifies a form of “sustainable development” – a “process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs” (WCED—Brundtland, 1987). Others, however, believe that the interface between environment and development raises issues of poverty and social justice linked with issues of environmental preservation and resource control and accessibility (Wells, 1992).

Many countries in Latin America are encountering this relationship between conservation and development as they attempt to manage their natural resources for development goals. To pursue these, key threats to environmental protection such as growing urbanization, farmland expansion, and increased food production among other specific threats unique to each location (Brown, et. al., 1999), have to be considered in new policy plans. Since the needs of people, especially the poor living in fragile
ecosystems, must be addressed, there is also much at stake in protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable utilization of natural resources.

This study explored tourism’s intersection of environmental protection and sustainable development, from the perspective of visitors’ satisfaction and local participation of people from the region where this research was undertaken. Central to this exploratory research were the following questions:

- What is the feasibility of creating a tourism product with the existing infrastructure?
- Is tourism an adequate option for the region given its cultural, ecological, and physical characteristics?
- Are the communities ready to incorporate new activities related to tourism development?
- What are the capabilities and skills of the communities for receiving visitors?
- What are the necessary activities to minimize visitor’s impact into the communities’ lifestyle?

With the intention of understanding the relationship between visitors’ satisfaction and community involvement with sustainability, quantitative and qualitative data were collected. A survey was carried out in the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve (MCFP) in an effort to identify tourists’ preferences during their visit to a Protected Area. Also, information gathered during community meetings and workshops allowed for further understanding of the research topic.

This exploratory research begins to search for answers to the questions listed above and in a more global context, of how sustainability can be achieved. Understanding
visitors’ satisfaction and local involvement as key issues for the sustainability of the tourism sector, this research explores the relationship between them and Costa Rica’s pursuit of finding a sustainable tourism strategy.

Objectives of the Major Research Paper

The original purpose of this project was to design a community-based plan for sustainable tourism in the Las Nubes region. The area includes York University’s Las Nubes Biological Reserve (hereafter “Las Nubes”), Tropical Science Centre’s (TSC) Los Cusingos Neotropical Bird Sanctuary (hereafter “Los Cusingos”), the area of Chirripó National Park adjacent to Las Nubes, the city of San Isidro de El General and nearby communities.¹

This paper suggests an approach that the region of study may take as a contribution to sustainable development in a tourism context. According to Hunter (1997, p.851), sustainable tourism “should not be regarded as a rigid framework, but rather as an adaptive paradigm which legitimizes a variety of approaches according to specific circumstances.” Furthermore, it emphasizes, in accordance with several academics (Inskeep, 1991), how adequate planning for tourism can support the goals of conservation and community development.

The specific objectives of this research were:

- To further my understanding of sustainability concerns of the tourism sector and to conceptualize these issues through the case study of the study region.

¹ This area will hereafter be referred to as “the region” or “the region of study” unless otherwise is specified.
• To define whether the region was appropriate for tourism development, and if this was the case, define the type of tourism adequate to the particularities of the region.
• To identify the unique preferences of the tourist market that visits Costa Rica’s protected areas.
• To collaborate with community members in the examination of issues related to the idea of bringing tourists to the region
• To identify the possibilities of using tourism as a strategic tool to support biodiversity conservation and community development in the region.

Rationale

Costa Rica is currently undergoing and economic recession due to the drop of the prices of coffee and because of the global economic situation. According to Rice (1993, as cited in Znajda, 2000) the contribution of coffee to total exports in the country decreased from 42% to 10% over the period of 1965 to 1993. This drop severely impacted the most sensible sector of the population: the rural sector. Thus, farmers in the study region are looking for supplementary sources of income to support their households. Many of them have abandoned their crops given that it would be less profitable to work the land than abandoning it until the price of coffee increased (Luis Angel Rojas, per. comm., 2002). Other members of the community opted to migrate to the United States in search for better income-generating opportunities at the expense of abandoning their families for periods of time that could range from one to five years (Luis Angel Rojas, Edén Chinchilla, Rómulo Fonseca, per. comm., 2002), thus, it is common to see that the household head is, in many cases, a single mother.
On the other hand, the tourism sector in Costa Rica is the top generator of foreign revenues. It is above the banana industry (US$633.2 million); coffee (US$417.1 million) and beef (US$43.6 million) (ICT, 1995). Tourism revenue is only exceeded by the income generated in the “zona franca”\(^2\) since 1997 and the corporate industrial sector. Furthermore, for the last years, tourism has generated between 15% and 25% of Costa Rica’s total exports (ICT, 2002). Today, nature tourism and ecotourism are high growth areas within the tourism market. Northerner’s interest in natural environments and traditional cultures takes them to less developed places that lack mass tourism infrastructure. Given its vast natural areas and rich biodiversity, Costa Rica has good conditions for attracting international ecotourists. Besides, in contrast to other Latin American countries, much of Costa Rica’s popularity is due to its political stability and high standards of living (Inman, n.d.). Although nature tourism is the niche that put Costa Rica on the map of global tourism industry, it was not the focus of the development efforts of the ICT (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo)\(^3\) in the past. Typically, this institutions strategy intended to attract foreign investors by developing large-scale mass tourism destinations (Alberto Salas, per. comm.2002).

However, during the last 5-8 years, the ICT has changed this approach recognizing that nature tourism provides an extensive source of revenue while supporting the goal of conservation of its natural areas. Nature conservation contributes to tourism and tourism contributes to the national economy (Hearne, 2002). Today, nature figures prominently in the promotional campaigns for Costa Rican tourism; the slogan “No Artificial Ingredients” denotes the image of Costa Rica as a nature-destination with

\(^2\) “Zona franca” refers to those corporations exonerated from the payment of taxes

\(^3\) ICT is Costa Rica’s Tourism Board
widespread environmental consciousness. The nature tourism segment can be described as that where tourists travel to with the intention of having contact with nature (Inman, n.d.). This broad definition gives place to a wide variety of options that can satisfy the “ecotourist” niche’s needs. Without falling into the description of the multiple activities and combination of these that can be undertaken by ecotourists, for the purpose of this paper, I focused on tourism based in protected areas.

My initial survey was conducted on visitors to the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve (hereafter Monteverde); the resultant data were supplemented by the information gathered from informal conversations and meetings with community members and with different representatives of the tourism sector in the country⁴. This information helped to determine the feasibility of introducing a particular type of tourism in the region of study.

Finally, this paper hopes to contribute to the ongoing research commitment between the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) and the TSC with the purpose of developing a better understanding of the region.

Organization of Major Paper

Chapter 1 gives background information of the tourism sector in the world, its trends and the rationale for why tourism has been considered as a tool for sustainable development.

⁴ These representatives included tour operator agents, government representatives, academics, consultants and entrepreneurs in the field.
Chapter 2 examines the context of tourism in Costa Rica, including a description of the country, a historical overview of its tourism development as well as the role that this sector has played in conservation initiatives.

Chapter 3 presents a description of the main points of interest of the region of study from a tourism perspective and describes the potential for sustainable tourism development.

Chapter 4 describes the activities undertaken during the research process, the methodologies chosen to achieve the objectives set in the project and how they were carried out.

Chapter 5 reveals the results of the Montverde survey applied during July 2002. The results are presented both in descriptive and graphical fashion for a better understanding and easier analysis.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and recommendations suggested as a result of the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the research.
1.1 Tourism

Tourism is the world’s largest and most diverse economic sector. It employs approximately one in nine workers worldwide, it is one of the world’s largest exports, and provides a major incentive for investment and growth. International tourism receipts constitute a higher proportion of the value of world exports than all sectors other than petroleum products and motor related industry (WTO-2).

Tourism was one of the major economic and social phenomena of the twentieth century. From being an activity enjoyed by a small cluster of wealthy people in the beginnings of the last century, it became a mass phenomenon in developed countries by the 1970’s and, by the turn of the century, reached other groups that had not had the same opportunities.

1.2 Impacts of Travel and Tourism

During the 1960s and 1970s, tourism development was based on economic objectives with limited regard for environmental and socio-cultural impacts (Inskeep, 1991). Tourism certainly has important economic benefits; according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (as cited in Inman, n.d.), tourism has an above average potential to create more employment and is the largest generator of jobs. It creates jobs directly in travel and stimulates jobs across the economy in other related sectors. This is why many developing countries use tourism to pump the local economy and to attract external investments. The positive impact of tourism shows that tourism strengthens the economy of many areas. These economic benefits are best understood as “gross increase
in the wealth or income measured in monetary terms, of people located in an area over
and above the levels that would prevail in the absence of the activity under study”
(Frechtling 1987, 328 as cited in Gunn, 1994). Economic benefits can be expressed as
primary or secondary as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Economic Benefits of Travel and Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Primary or Direct Benefits</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Business receipts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Labor and proprietor’s income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Corporate profits, dividends, interest and rent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Private employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Public employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Government receipts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Federal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Local</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Secondary Benefits

1. Indirect benefits generated by primary business outlays, including investment
   i. Business receipts
   ii. Income
   iii. Employment
   iv. Government receipts

2. Induced benefits generated by spending of primary income
   i. Business receipts
   ii. Income
   iii. Employment
   iv. Government receipts

Source: Frechtling 1987, 30

The overwhelming impact of tourism has the potential to contribute to the
development of countries with weaker economies by creating employment, infrastructure
development, foreign currency and government revenue; tourism also has the potential of
enabling some members of the population to move from the informal sector to higher
paid jobs in the formal sector (Sinclaire, 1998).
However, tourism has had strong environmental and socio-economic negative impacts related to the type and intensity of tourism development. Among these, water and air pollution, ecological disruption of natural environments and waste management have been some of the undesirable impacts generated by this sector. In spite of this, tourism has the potential of improving environmental conditions of previously degraded areas; conserving archaeological and historic sites; increasing environmental awareness and education and improving existing infrastructure (Inskeep, 1991). The planning of new tourism ventures will determine the type and level of impacts it will create.

### 1.3 Tourism Trends

Some key trends in occurring in the world include an increase in market segmentation signifying a development of new forms of tourism known as alternative tourism, which particularly refer to those forms related to nature, wildlife, cultural heritage and rural areas (WTO-3) and include: Rural tourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism and nature-oriented tourism among others. Although this paper will not make distinctions on the different types of alternative tourism, it recognizes the importance and attention that ecotourism has had for the past decade. The International EcoTourism Society (TIES) has defined this form of tourism as:

> “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people”

This definition contains the ideological principles of alternative forms of tourism: the primary attraction is nature-based with cultural features as a secondary component; the emphasis is on the study and/or appreciation of the resource as opposed to the use of
them as a venue for other activities, and the activities of tourists are benign with respect to their impact upon their physical and cultural environment of the destination (Weaver, 1999).

Nature tourism and ecotourism have become high growth areas within the tourism sector. However, although the number of nature tourists and ecotourists remains small compared to the total international travellers, the high growth rate of this segment has offered attractive business opportunities for different sectors of the economy (Higgins, 1996). As a result of this, there has been a rise of independent and large-scale tourism businesses that rely on the good conditions of the natural environment for their success. In addition to this, an increase in environmental awareness in the world (Inman, n.d.) has changed the travelling preferences of tourists, in particular, North Americans and Europeans (Travis, as cited in Inman, n.d.).

1.4 Tourism, Benefits and Conservation

Tourism can have positive environmental benefits through the establishment of wildlife preserves, the restoration of historical sites and landmarks, and the preservation of pristine environments. Tourism can have social and cultural impacts by assisting in the revival of the arts and handicrafts of some host communities, by recognizing unique cultures and heightening indigenous traditions. However, the potential environmental impacts are significant and, although in the past tourism was almost always considered to be beneficial, more recently the negative aspects have been recognized and analyzed.
1.5 Sustainable Tourism

Attention to the Earth’s finite natural resources, and a sense of social responsibility to host communities influenced by tourism, are key issues for the successful continuity (sustainability) of the tourism sector. Finding ways to enhance the environment, rather than degrading it, must be the prevailing concern of tourism. Cater, Manning and Dougherty (1995) emphasise that unless responsible management practices take place, the tourism sector can end up degrading the features on which it is based. Therefore, prioritising actions that simultaneously improve the environment while encouraging economic and social development is the main challenge that tourism currently faces (Strong, n.d.).

Origin of Sustainable Tourism

The origin of the term Sustainable Tourism (ST) derives from the concept of sustainable development, which was popularized in the 1980’s with the 1987 publication of Our Common Future, developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). Sustainable development was defined as:

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

(WCED, 1987)

and aims to protect and enhance the environment, meet basic human needs, promote inter-generational equity and improve the quality of life of all (Inskeep, 2001). In 1992, 

5 This document has been popularized as The Brundtland Report
during the Rio Summit, tourism was identified as a key sector of the economy that could make a positive contribution to sustainable development. Hence, there is wide acceptance that sustainability is one of the major concerns of the tourism sector.

**Definition**

Recent years have seen the emergence of substantial literature on ST that include a variety of management approaches and tools designed to better integrate tourism development and the protection of the natural environment at tourism destinations (Buckley, 1998). Although many attempts exist to find a definition for sustainable tourism, there is no universally accepted definition of this term. It is frequently explained simply as a form of development where tourism, economic development, protection for the natural resources and social needs of locals and tourists are balanced. However, this interpretation results weak and lacks further analysis of the implications of tourism destinations. However, other interpretations for ST focus in the tourism sector and maintenance of environmental quality at the destination to ensure the continued survival of existing products and development of new products at the existing and new locations with little attention to the needs of natural resources and considerations for good management (Stabler, 1997 as cited in Hunter, 2002). In contrast, stronger interpretations of ST imply a strong component on the need to plan for tourism and monitor changes to the natural resources advocating for the usage of the precautionary principle. These interpretations have strong emphasis on the protection of natural resources which support tourism rather than on the promotion of tourism related economic growth for its own sake (Hunter, 2002).
Goodall and Stable (1997, as cited in Hunter, 2002) argue that if there are any doubts in terms of the long-term consequences of tourism, knowing in advance that it will damage the natural environment, then its development should not take place. A brief summary of the debate of the two broad categories of sustainable tourism is presented in Table 2. Although these are only simplifications, they provide the essence of the variation and diversity that the notion of ST has among academics.

The purpose of introducing tourism in the Las Nubes region is based under the strong variant of the ST definition. It is not intended to substitute current agricultural practices nor to advocate for the development of infrastructure other than the needed for the basic needs of the communities (i.e. better roads and communication system). On the contrary, tourism in the Las Nubes region has as its main driving force the conservation of the natural environment over financial benefits.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaker Variant</th>
<th>Stronger Variant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advocate and strongly favouring new product development</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cautionary and knowledge-based</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits of tourism assumed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Benefits of tourism must be demonstrated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maintain tourism activity in existing destinations and expand into new ones</strong></td>
<td><strong>Widen economic base if high dependency on tourism and engage in full proactive assessment of new tourism development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism destinations must be maintained and evolve according to market need (nature considered as a commodity)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Natural resources must be maintained and impacts reduced where possible with products tailored accordingly</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental action only when required or beneficial</strong></td>
<td><strong>Environmental impacts always considered as a matter of routine</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disperse and dilute activity (spread)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focus and concentrate activity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry self-regulation as dominant management approach</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wide range of management approaches and instruments required</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most likely to have a direct involvement in the industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goals of Sustainable Tourism

The goals of Sustainable Tourism, as stated by Inskeep (1991) are:

1. To generate profit
2. To improve the quality of life of the host community;
3. To maintain the quality of the environment on which the foregoing objectives depend
4. To promote equity in development;
5. To develop greater awareness and understanding of the significant contributions that tourism can make to the environment and the economy; and
6. To provide a high quality experience for the visitor.

Therefore, sustainable tourism suggests that the development of the tourism sector should have economic advantages; be gender sensitive, create awareness, create social benefits for the communities; and not harm the natural environment; and that these goals should apply to present and future generations. There is no general consensus on how this type of development can be accomplished. However, in a global movement that recognizes the dependency of tourism on the environment, and the need to have defined policies and strategies that can help achieve the goals of sustainable development, international organizations have made numerous attempts divulging information on this topic with the purpose of creating a global coalition that leads towards sustainable
development of the tourism sector. Among these, some of the most outstanding are: The
10 Principles of Sustainable Tourism produced by Tourism Concern, in the UK; (see
Figure 1); the International Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism by the Convention on
Biological Diversity; UNEP Principles on Sustainable Tourism; the Costa Rican
Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST), among others. (Appendix A).

The scope of this paper is not to add to the already extensive literature on the
various interpretations of sustainability in the tourism sector. Rather, it recognizes the
multiple approaches that try to label the concept of sustainable tourism, from the
narrowly defined concept reliant on a search of balance, to the paradigm within which
several different development pathways may be justified according to particular
believe that different interpretations of sustainable tourism may be appropriate for
developed and developing countries. Thus, the study undertaken in Costa Rica is based
on the principles of sustainable development adapted to the conditions of the local
communities and the surrounding natural environment with consideration to tourists’
travelling preferences.
### Figure 1

#### 10 Principles of Sustainable Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.- Using Resources Sustainably</td>
<td>The conservation and sustainable use of resources - natural, social and cultural - is crucial and makes long-term business sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.- Reducing Over-Consumption and Waste</td>
<td>Reduction of over-consumption and waste avoids the costs of restoring long-term damage and contributes to the quality of tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.- Maintaining Diversity</td>
<td>Maintaining and promoting natural, social and cultural diversity is essential for long-term sustainable tourism, and creates a resilient base for the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.- Integrating Tourism Into Planning</td>
<td>Tourism development which is integrated into a national and local strategic planning framework undertakes environmental impact assessments, increases the long-term viability of tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.- Supporting Local Economies</td>
<td>Tourism that supports a wide range of local economic activities and which takes environmental costs and values into account, both protects those economies and avoids environmental damage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.- Involving Local Communities</td>
<td>The full involvement of local communities in the tourism sector not only benefits them and the environment in general but also improves the quality of the tourism experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.- Consulting Stakeholders and the Public</td>
<td>Consultation between the tourism industry and local communities, organisations and institutions is essential if they are to work alongside each other and resolve potential conflicts of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.- Training Staff</td>
<td>Staff training which integrates sustainable tourism into work practices, along with recruitment of local personnel at all levels, improves the quality of the tourism product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.- Marketing Tourism Responsibly</td>
<td>Marketing providing tourists with full and responsible information increases respect for the natural, social and cultural environments of destination areas and enhances customer satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.- Undertaking Research</td>
<td>On-going research and monitoring by the industry using effective data collection and analysis is essential to help solve problems and to benefit destinations, industry and consumers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tourism Concern (n.d.)
2.1 Brief Description of Costa Rica

Costa Rica is located in Central America, bordering with Nicaragua to the North, Panama to the South, and the Pacific Ocean to the West and the Caribbean Sea to the East. Its land area is of 51,000 square kilometers making it only larger than El Salvador and Belize. It supports a population of 3,486,048 inhabitants (MIDEPLAN, 2000).

Costa Rica houses a wide variety of flora and fauna accounting for 4% of the world’s biodiversity (ICT, 2002). The country’s surface area represents only 0.03% of all land on Earth, yet 5-6% of all documented species occur here with many of these endemic to Costa Rica. This is a result of the observed high amount of diversity in tropical areas (Jablonsky, 1993), caused by the broad spectrum of habitats that range from wet to dry, altitudes that go from 0 to 4,000 m., temperate to tropical weather, uniform conditions of light, temperature and moisture combined with the fact that the country serves as a major land bridge connecting North and South America (Roman, 2001).

Costa Rica was the most neglected of colonial Central America, mostly because it was too far away from the colonial governors based in Guatemala and because of its lack of mineral wealth. As other countries in Latin America were colonized by the Spanish, only a few colonists claimed lands in Costa Rica by 1611, because it had neither of the two things the Spanish conquistadors wanted: mineral assets (gold and silver), or an abundant Indigenous population to work the land. The absence of minerals and
Indigenous workers meant that only the few existing settlers worked their own large extensions of land. Like in Guatemala and El Salvador, coffee attracted foreign capital and immigrant merchants to Costa Rica, and promoted road and railroad development. Other goods that favoured from an increase of production and of market prices were sugar, bananas and meat. It was only until after the economic crisis of the agricultural sector during the 1980’s that conditions were appropriate for the development of tourism, a new economic activity that would attract foreign currency to the country (Morera, 2001).

2.2 Tourism in Costa Rica

Costa Rica’s tourism market is based on a mixture of ecotourism, adventure and mass tourism. Its development in the country has been fast, with much of the expansion happening in the North-Pacific and Caribbean coasts. As a consequence of the Law of Incentives, promulgated by the Costa Rican government in 1985, international investments provided infrastructure facilities that were non-existent before (Alberto Salas, per. comm. 2002); and albeit at times basic, this infrastructure allows for accessibility to tourist attractions. This law, was probably the main force that initiated tourism in Costa Rica as we know it today (Stanley Arguedas, per. comm., 2002). Costa Rica’s competitive tourism advantage over other countries in the region is based upon its diversity of attractions, including a well established Protected Area System in

6 Papagayo, located in the North Pacific of Costa Rica, is considered the most exclusive sun and beach destination in the country, Tortuguero, a popular destination in the North Caribbean coast has obtained its popularity from sea turtle nestings.

7 Ley 6990 de Incentivos al Turismo

8 Attractions vary from sun and beach to ecotourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, etc.
addition to its internationally recognized political stability exceptional in the region (Morera, 2001).

Although the history of tourism is still very recent, it has experienced dramatic growth and reduction periods. For example, during 1995-1997, the tourism sector was halted, possibly because of: high entrance fees at National Parks; lack of built infrastructure and services; and lack of tourism-oriented culture. As a result of this decline, the Costa Rican government designed specific strategies to attract international tourists and make up for the bad reputation it had created. Among these, educational programs related to tourism were created and promotional campaigns were designed to change Costa Rica’s image as an ecological destination (Alberto Salas, per. comm., 2002)

2.3 Tourism, Conservation and Community Development in Costa Rica

Early visitorship by scientists and conservationists doing research on a variety of disciplines, mainly forest ecosystems, put Costa Rica on the map. This, along with the development of Costa Rica’s National Park System (SINAC), was the key to the current importance of ecotourism in the country (Báez, 1996; Inman, n.d.). Furthermore, Costa Rica has made these lands more accessible to tourists than in any other country in the region recognizing this sector as a strong supporter of conservation (Budowski, 1993; Inman, n.d.).

The 1980 World Conservation Strategy emphasized the importance of linking protected area management with the economic activities of local communities. Many nature-tourism activities have started based on the assumption that tourism will provide funds for protected area management and generate income gains for local communities (Brandon, 1992). However, many projects (containing a tourism component) seeking to
improve livelihoods of local people, have provided little benefit; nevertheless, many national parks are major tourist attractions in rural areas offering significant opportunities for small local enterprises (Goodwin & Roe, 2001).

For example, Monteverde has developed a variety of different businesses, (most of them locally owned) including a butterfly garden, book stores, coffee shops, restaurants, craft and souvenir stores among others. Although Monteverde has made of conservation a way of life as a result of the local community’s recognition of the value of natural resources for tourism (Baez, 1996), its increased popularity has placed some tension on natural and human resources (Honey, 1994). It would then be irresponsible not to mention the social impacts caused by the presence of tourists, making of Monteverde a quite different place than what it used to be a decade ago. Since tourism in protected areas will always come with benefits and impacts, it is important that people and communities participate in the decisions of managing the resources and activities that take place in each destination.

2.4 The South Pacific Region of Costa Rica

Los Cusingos and Las Nubes are located in the South Pacific region of the country (Figure 2). In this section, I will describe briefly the main features of this area in an effort to establish the context of my research.

The Southern region of Costa Rica is also known as the Brunca region for the political and commercial influence the indigenous culture of the Borucas, one among several indigenous populations that still inhabit the area. The South Pacific region of Costa Rica is rich in ecosystems, microclimates, and tourist attractions within an area of 9,528 km² (Gilberth Fallas, per. comm., 2002). It encompasses the southern half of
coastal Puntarenas Province to Punta Burica on the Panamenian border as well as the mountainous southern half of San José province and inland Limón and Puntarenas province including Chirripó National Park and La Amistad International Park (Blake & Becher, 2001). It is situated between the Pacific Ocean and the Talamanca mountain range with a number of rivers and valleys giving it a large variety of topography, extending from high mountain plateaus to marine environments, allowing for the existence of distinct microclimates giving the region a great wealth of flora and fauna making this area ideal for nature tourism-related activities.

Figure: 2

Costa Rica Regions

Source:.costaricaoutdoors
The South Pacific region features four national parks: Corcovado National Park, Chirripó National Park, Ballena National Marine Park and La Amistad International Park, as well as Caño Island Biological Reserve. However, due to the lack of infrastructure and development, the South Pacific has always been regarded as the forgotten and wild part of Costa Rica (Alberto Salas, per. comm., 2002). Nonetheless, this region is currently undergoing a process of change. The “Costanera”, the main highway that connects the central part of the country with the south and Panama, is undergoing its final construction stages. Although the purpose of this highway is to shorten the route south and to facilitate transportation and exports towards Panama, it will certainly have an impact on the tourism sector. Although tourism development in this area has almost been neglected by the Costa Rican Tourism Bureau (hereafter ICT), there exists general consensus on the tourism potential the region offers if developed carefully and with sensitivity to its natural and cultural resources (Ana Baez, Alberto Salas, Walter Odio, Noel Ureña, per. comm., 2002). As a sign of this, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Tourism and Agriculture of the Southern Zone, along with the Union of Chambers of Commerce of the South Pacific, have initiated efforts that concentrate on promoting the natural features of the region as a strategy to attract nature-oriented tourists (Fallas, 2001).

In view of this, implementing a new approach integrating agriculture and tourism with conservation and community development is suggested for the region of Las Nubes. The activities performed by stakeholders will influence the successful implementation of this new approach. The question would be how this potential will be developed and under what circumstances and criteria. This will be discussed in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 3: A CASE STUDY OF LAS NUBES REGION

In this chapter, I will present a general description of the area of study where the fieldwork took place and where the potential strategies suggested by this research would occur. Defining the context of the region and describing the existing infrastructure facilitates the evaluation of their potential to offer the necessary conditions for developing sustainable tourism activities.

3.1 Description of the Region

In his book, A Naturalist in Costa Rica (1971), Dr. Alexander Skutch describes the South Pacific Region of this country in 1935:

“…it was almost completely covered by great humid jungle, interrupted here and there by a few small villages …”

In those days, there were only two possible ways to access this part of the country… either by using the cart trail (today, the Inter.-Americana highway) or through an aerial service that would only take an hour or less. Today, the South Pacific is connected to the Central Valley through the Inter-Americana Highway, allowing this area, the Valle de El General, to stay connected with the rest of the country.

3.2 El Valle de El General

El Valle de El General was possibly first populated by indigenous people from the Brunca tribe who left behind scattered evidence of their presence; however, by the 1930s
only a few of them were left. Subsequent immigrants came from the central region of the
country and eventually settled down in the Valley giving birth to present settlements
(Skutch, 1971). Like the rest of the country, the Valley presents only a dry and wet
season, the latter going from May to December. The invierno (winter) or wet season goes
from May to December and is characterized by sunny mornings and heavy rains during
the afternoons and evenings, which were the almost daily conditions under which the
field research was done. The General Valley is characterized for being a fertile tropical
mountain valley with a pleasant climate with lush vegetation creating picturesque
landscapes.

3.3 San Isidro de El General

San Isidro de El General is the main city of the county of Perez Zeledón in the
General Valley. San Isidro is the main centre of both private and public services for the
entire region. San Isidro is, for many tourists, the starting point to visit close by
attractions such as Manuel Antonio National Park, Chirripó National Park, Marino
Ballena National Park, and Golfito. Perez Zeledón is a rural-agricultural county with
many small property owners who commonly grow coffee, sugarcane, basic grains (corn
and beans), tobacco, fruits and vegetables, as well as fisheries (mainly tilapia). The
Interamerican highway connects San José to San Isidro de El General with a travelling
distance of 3 hours. The rest of the region is accessible either through dirt or paved roads
however, remote areas, just like in the 1930’s, are only accessible by plane.

San Isidro is the main industrial and agricultural centre in the south; as well as the
principal source of employment in the region (Gilberth Fallas, per. comm., 2002). It
represents the foremost commercial distribution point boasting the most important
transportation system, government offices, communications (internet service, public telephones, etc.), accommodations and entertainment services in the region. Moreover, San Isidro is the principal meeting place to the many natural attractions that are found in and around the valley. It is also a safe place for tourists to stop for a day.

Dr. Skutch described Costa Ricans as kind people with a pleasant lack of formality (Skutch, 1971), and the people of San Isidro clearly depict this portrayal. Always welcoming and helpful, the people of San Isidro are the ones who make this industrial centre, a delightful place. San Isidro offers a balance between chaos and tranquility, between town and city inspiring a feeling of being away from the rest of the world. Personally, I enjoyed sitting on the front porch of the Chirripó Hotel drinking coffee during the early morning hours before offices and stores opened. Unfortunately for some, but fortunately for others, this small-city-town atmosphere will soon be radically transformed, since shortly before ending my research, several posters seeking job candidates advertised the opening of a McDonalds.

3.4 Selected Communities: Santa Elena and Quizarrá

Quizarrá can be described in many ways, but for Dr. Skutch it was the perfect place for the home he had dreamed of, it was the source of inspiration and information for most of his scholarly papers and books on life histories of birds and philosophy:

…I desired something even more difficult, to penetrate profoundly in the secreted causes of that phenomenon called life…”

Skutch, 1971
The communities of Santa Elena and Quizarrá are located no more than fifteen minutes away from the Inter-Americana highway and 35 minutes away (bus ride) from San Isidro (Figure 3). The main activity in both towns is coffee cultivation and, in a smaller proportion, sugar cane cultivation. There are still some remaining patches of primary and secondary forest, which have been recently exploited for both local use and for sale. Both communities have limited infrastructure restricted to a few public buildings and services. Transportation service to these towns is quite well organized, and efficient. A bus runs from San Isidro to Quizarrá and Santa Elena twice a day following a fairly reliable but limited schedule. This limits economic and social activities that could be done in San Isidro or elsewhere in the area, and taking a taxi is not an affordable option. The bus runs through unpaved dirt roads, which represent a challenge for any type of vehicle, especially during the rainy season.

According to a study made by COCOFORES, only 30% of potable water is supplied by Agua y Acueductos, the ministry in charge of water supply in the country. The other 70% is obtained from natural springs or rivers (COCOFORES, 2000). No hospital or clinic exists in the region, only a public health station that is visited by a doctor once a month. Regardless of these limitations, locals enjoy a healthy and pleasurable lifestyle. Most families own the land upon which they cultivate as well as own commodities such as television, stereo, and frequently, a car. Interestingly, many houses still prefer using wood-burning stoves rather than electric ones.

Costa Rica boasts one of the highest educational levels in Latin America; a high percentage of children attend primary and secondary school, although a low percentage

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9 COCOFORES is a local NGO integrated by members of the communities of Santa Elena and Quizarrá
Region of Study - Las Nubes

Figure 3
Map of Las Nubes Region
of them get to finish high school (Loria, 2000-1). Both Santa Elena and Quizarrá have local primary schools with consistently high attendance (Don Miguel, per. comm., 2002) supported by the education system, which implemented the “summer vacations” during the coffee cultivation season to keep children from missing school and allow them to be available to help their parents.

Although there is no sign of severe poverty in the region, a high percentage of the younger male population in these towns tend to leave the country for a few years to make a living in the United States (Loria, n.d.). The main state where they go to is New Jersey, where a large community of Costa Ricans live. The goal is generally to work there (illegally) and save enough money with the purpose of buying land upon their return to the country.

3.5 Las Nubes Biological Reserve

In 1998, Dr. Woody Fisher, a prominent Toronto physician, donated 116.90 ha. of primary and secondary forest in Costa Rica to York University’s Faculty of Environmental Studies. Today, this property, now called Las Nubes Biological Reserve (Figure 3) has been central to research undertakings for MES students. A small portion of Las Nubes is adjacent to Chirripó National Park (50,150 ha.), which is part of one of the largest protected areas in the region: The La Amistad International Park. This gives Las Nubes its importance as a conservation area.

The southern and western borders of Las Nubes are mainly covered with pastures with some patches of forest. Las Nubes has 124.37 hectares from which 116.90. are

10 La Amistad International Park represents transboundary efforts between Panama and Costa Rica for the protection of natural ecosystems. Although there are discrepancies on its total area, UNEP has accepted a total of 207,000 hectares
primary forest and 7.46 ha. secondary forest. The Peñas Blancas River runs across the reserve and eventually joins the El General River. Although no in-depth scientific studies have been made in Las Nubes, there have been sightings of large mammals that include jaguars (*Panthera onca*), collared pecary (*Tayassu tajacu*), known by locals as *chancho de monte*, Baird’s tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*), and ocelots. Bird species such as Black-faced solitaires (*Myadestes melanops*) are also common (Znajda, 2000). Las Nubes did not have any infrastructure until the past summer, when a water pipe was placed to supply water to the local communities; trees were cut down to form a trail, where the pipe would run (personal observation).

### 3.6 Los Cusingos Neotropical Bird Sanctuary

Los Cusingos has been home to Dr. Alexander Skutch (Figure 4) since 1941. He and his deceased wife Pamela spent their lives in harmony with their natural surroundings. Los Cusingos is the local name for the Fiery-billed Aracari (*Pteroglossus frantzii*) and although Dr. Skutch describes the *cusingos* as “presumptuous bandits” given their characteristic personality, he chose to name his farm after this bird since it would be easy for locals to pronounce this name rather than that of one of his preferred birds, the “Jacamar” (Skutch, 1971).
Figure 4
Dr. Alexander Skutch and caretaker Claudio
The property is 76.96 ha. in size and all of it, except for the immediate surroundings of Sr. Skutch’s house, (which include a conference room, a cabin, a small campsite area and the park ranger’s house) is covered by forest. Most of the property boasts lush primary (50.02 ha.) and secondary (26.9 ha) growth forest. The forest is rich in epiphytes, such as orchids and bromeliads and heliconias; it is also rich in medicinal plants such as achiotillo and zorrillo, which are popular among locals for homemade remedies. Its avifauna is also a quite diverse accounting with 307 species of which 171 are residents and the rest are migrants (TSC, 1993).

The TSC has initiated some actions into improving (with Dr. Skutch’s consent) the infrastructure at Los Cusingos. With the aim to support community projects, a needs assessment was made and as a result of this, some of the current existing facilities were built and electricity introduced (Appendix B)
CHAPTER 4: FIELD RESEARCH

4.1 Research Methods

This study involved primary, qualitative and quantitative data collection as well as information from secondary data sources. This approach was chosen because of the complexity of the research topic in hopes of providing a strong theoretical foundation for a phenomenon which has been widely discussed but that has hardly reached any consensus. The intent, however, was to obtain an understanding of this topic from the perspective of local residents and tourists. Field research consisted on primary and secondary data collection through revision of government documents as well as informal interviews with policy-makers and NGO representatives. The informal open-ended interviews with locals from Santa Elena and Quizarrá provided information on their perceptions on a tourism project in the region.

This research was comprised of three phases, with various activities carried out over an 8-month period. These phases included: 1) preliminary literature research; 2) field research in Costa Rica, and 3) data analysis and preparation of the final document.

The first phase, from February-May, 2002 consisted of literature review. The second phase, the field research, was carried out during May-July, 2002. This phase consisted of three components: first, research on different tourism perspectives and development in the country; this research was carried out through document review and informal interviews with representatives of different tourism sectors in Costa Rica. 11 second, informal interviews and meetings with locals in the region of study and third.

11 this research was conducted in San Jose City
survey application to tourists visiting Monteverde. The third phase, data analysis, and major paper writing took place from September-November, 2002.

4.2 Integrating into the Community

During the first week spent in the region of study, a small group of people from local NGO COCOFORES, held its monthly meeting in the multiple-use room at Los Cusingos. This meeting allowed us to introduce ourselves formally with community leaders and discuss our research projects. From this first meeting, Christos Astaras, an MES student doing research on buffer zones, and myself were able to begin a relationship with locals. In addition, working in the tree nursery\textsuperscript{12}, a day trip to Marino Ballena National Park with community members (Figure 6) and participating in a school play\textsuperscript{13}, were essential factors that helped in the process of integrating into the community. These activities allowed me to get to know people better and translated into visiting their homes for informal interviews where relevant information on their concerns and ideas on initiating tourism-related activities were shared and discussed.

\textsuperscript{12} A tree nursery project was initiated by York University volunteers with the purpose of providing farmers with local trees for the creation of a biological corridor between Las Nubes and Los Cusingos.

\textsuperscript{13} The play, “La Leyenda del Gran Cusingo Escupefuegos” (The Legend of the Great Fiery-Billed Cusingo) was written and directed by Marisa Victor, a student at York University. All volunteers participated in the presentation of this play which was performed to all grades in the school of Santa Elena.
Figure 5
York University Students in Santa Elena School

Figure 6
York University students and community members at Marino Ballena National Park
4.3 Interviews

The interviews that were conducted as part of this research, can be divided as follows: 1: Informal interviews with tourism sector representatives (Appendix D); 2: Informal interviews with members of the region of study, and 3: Tourism surveys applied to tourists visiting Monteverde.

Interviews with Tourism Sector Representatives

The purpose of interviewing people from a diversity of backgrounds was to elicit their thoughts on the current development of the tourism sector of the country, particularly in the segment in which each of the interviewees was specifically involved in. As a result of these interviews, I obtained a clear understanding of the main issues of concern needed to be addressed for any tourism project, and how many community projects have failed due to a variety of reasons including lack of understanding the market, a lack of institutional support and a lack of vision (Leyla Solano, per. comm., 2002). Furthermore, the information provided by government institutions and NGOs was useful in answering questions to locals during the community meetings.

The interviews were conducted in the working place of the each interviewee; the content and direction depended on the nature of the organization. A set of standard questions for each informal interview was constructed, designed to open conversation on tourism, conservation and community development projects, etc. (Appendix C). Each interview was scheduled by appointment and the details and objectives of the project were explained to each participant. No informed consent statements were used; however,

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The questions would vary depending on the type of the institution and the function of each person within the institution.
oral consent was employed. For most interviews, detailed notes were taken and recorded in a logbook. In some cases, however, the interviews were videotaped to facilitate note-taking. A summary of the interviews is presented in Appendix D.

**Interviews with community members**

The interviews conducted in the region of study had two purposes: First, to understand the communities’ perception of the possibility of introducing tourists in the area. Second, if they showed interest in this, then what type of tourist would they rather see visiting the region. Overall, the interviews were semi-structured and conducted in an open way (Kvale, 1996) allowing for a comfortable atmosphere where conversation flowed easily and in a flexible manner. No specific order of questions was followed during these conversations; however, a set of questions was previously established so as to try to obtain the information needed in an informal setting (Appendix E). Oral consent was employed in all cases. The interviews varied according to attitudes and opinions of each individual, and in some cases, these ‘conversations’ led to narratives with spontaneous and emotional testimonies that allowed me to understand the people better. Although not all members of the community were interviewed, I was able to visit several households within the communities of Santa Elena and Quizarrá. Some of these households have initiated their own projects envisioning that they could someday be used as tourism attractions. Some examples included a small swimming pool that receives a constant flow of water from the Peñas Blancas River, a small cabin intended for future students that currently serves as a study room, the *tepezcuintle* farm initiative, among other simple developments.
Community Meetings

Community participation and collaboration are cornerstones for tourism projects success, local participation and input are critical components that must be included in a tourism planning process beginning with the design of the plan, then the people’s role in the process and finally, the follow-up (Drumm, 1993). As such, meetings were organized with the purpose of bringing the community together to discuss their perspective on the topics introduced by Christos15 and myself. The first meeting was very successful given the large number in attendance and their active participation16. The topics discussed

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15 Christos Astaras, MES Candidate, was undertaking research on buffer zones in the same region of study during the same period of time.
16 An approximate number of 80 people attended this first meeting.
allowed an initial interaction among the three closest communities in the region\(^1\) and led to the discovery that they had similar interests and common needs. Lunch was provided as well as childcare\(^2\).

The second meeting was a result of an informal conversation with two young women from the community of Santa Elena. They expressed their need to communicate to other women the existing problems within the community such as *machismo*, lack of economic resources and lack of job opportunities. Three enthusiastic young women of Santa Elena were the only participants, besides Christos and me. This was a challenging experience since it was difficult for the women to identify their ideas clearly and their reasons for having a women’s group in the community. Given the small size of this first meeting, close interaction between the young women and with the facilitators, allowed for open discussion of their ideas. This meeting provided a better understanding of their everyday living, problems, education and concerns. It would be hard to deny the level of difficulty we experienced while trying to help them express their ideas and thoughts, since it appeared that they expected us to provide them with the solution to their problems. It was observed how they constantly contradicted themselves and found it difficult to agree on certain issues. However, after long debate, they agreed that the solution to their problems would only come if they acted together as a coalition; therefore they agreed to gather more women from Santa Elena and scheduled another meeting a few weeks later.

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\(^1\) The three communities selected were Santa Elena, Quizarrá and Montecarlo.

\(^2\) Three community members were responsible for the preparation and distribution of lunch to all participants and two MES candidates, Brad Corner and Rina Cerratto were in charge of taking care of the children.
The third community meeting took place in the school of Santa Elena. The school director (Don Miguel), allowed us to use one of the rooms since it was more convenient for the women than meeting at Los Cusingos. On this occasion, the attendance was considerably higher with ten women in total. Given the context of this meeting, only the topics that were of their interest were discussed rather than using the opportunity to collect information relevant to my project. We asked the women to introduce themselves and to share with the group what their future goals were as well as to state the activities that they enjoyed doing. The purpose of talking about this was to find common links among this small group other than gender and age. Furthermore, we wanted to explore the traits of young women to give us better insight into the social circumstances in which they live and how this could affect the development of future regional plans. The following table summarizes the interests expressed in the meeting:

Table 3
A Summary of Participant Interests and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Current Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>Works in local store (pulperia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>General learning, beauty</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Home related</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Household, self-teaching English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Household, family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Beauty, sewing</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>School, household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Doesn’t know</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was general interest on the need to address and discuss as a group the following issues:

1. Machismo attitudes within the community;
2. How to obtain alternative sources of income;
3. How to support community integration, and
4. The increasing lack of security

In addition, there was consensus on the following:

1. They want a better quality of life and better opportunities for their children;
2. They are willing to work;
3. They will continue working on the women’s project;
4. They will support ideas from other members of the community;
5. They will visit other women’s groups; and
6. They want to be financially independent.

The outcome of this meeting was an agreement to make a public presentation to other community members during the next workshop.

The fourth and last community meeting represented the climax of the work and activities undertaken during our research in Costa Rica. The meeting was divided into three segments. First, Christos made a presentation of the community vision and discussed alternative activities that could be developed by community members in an effort to develop new practices for community development. In addition, preliminary results of research activities and the analysis of previous meetings were discussed.
Following this, I made a presentation on tourism opportunities in the region, in doing so, I started with background information on the role that the tourism sector played in the country, including examples of both mass tourism destinations and rural tourism destinations to which they could relate better19. Two discussion topics were raised, the first one was on the existing values (natural, cultural, historical) of the region. The purpose of this discussion was to obtain the community’s input on what they considered as important of the place in which they live. However, when asking people to give examples on this, their answers where focused mainly in Costa Rican dishes. This presented one of the main challenges to overcome, since from these responses, there was apparently no profound sense of pride of the place in which they live; one of the main components for community-tourism projects (Ana Baez, per. comm. 2002). However, after further discussion, the community came up with a list of regional values. The second topic discussed in this presentation was on their perception of potential tourism activity in Los Cusingos, and possibly the rest of the region. This topic was approached cautiously trying not to build any future expectations in the participants acknowledging that failing to accomplish this; it would affect future participatory projects. There was a consensus on the economic benefits they believed tourism could bring to the region; some of the suggestions given by participants included the willingness to host international visitors, to participate as tour guides and to provide food services to groups or individuals. Although they were able to identify some potential environmental impacts, they failed to do the same with social and economic impacts. Unfortunately, due

19 These examples were taken from projects supported by COOPRENA
to time constraints, there was not enough time to discuss this topic in detail and had to conclude the meeting in order to proceed with the workshops.

4.4 Workshops

The main purpose of the workshops was to illustrate the communities that they count with the necessary resources to implement creative activities with a sustainable approach. In the long term, undertaking these and other innovative activities, could provide local with tools for future sustainable endeavours. Furthermore, it would support community interaction and help develop a sense of pride for their region.

The organization of these workshops was challenging in the sense of logistics and budget; however, all thee specialists volunteered their time and donated some material. Christos and I covered food and travel expenses (including the cost of renting a truck to transport the material for the wood workshop) as well as for the material needed.

Flower Arrangements Workshop

- **Origin of the idea**: While visiting different households, I observed that women were particularly fond of their tropical gardens; however, because the variety and abundance of flowers and plants are so common to them, they had not realized that the beauty of their gardens could represent an attraction to foreigners who are not familiar with them.

- **Purpose**: To generate a sense of pride for their natural surroundings, their households, and to show them creative ways of working with local vegetation.

- **Focus Group**: Women of all ages.

- **Imparted by**: Arturo Guzman, owner of a local San Isidro flower shop, La Gardenia.

- **Approximate number of participants**: 17
• **Materials:** Wooden bases cut out from fallen trees, locally grown flowers, nails, wire and a sponge.

• **Outcome:** Besides the extraordinary flower arrangements, the satisfaction and motivation of having done something they didn’t believe they were capable of doing.

---

**Working with Wood Workshop**

• **Origin of the Idea:** Walking through the streets of San Isidro, a furniture store displayed a rustic dining room set which was hand-made by a local person of the nearby community of Cajon.

• **Purpose:** Provide opportunities of self-employment, provide motivation for building own furniture rather than buying it.

• **Focus Group:** Men.
• **Imparted by:** German Venegas, owner of “Muebleria Artesania Selvatica”

• **Approximate number of participants:** 16

• **Materials:** Branches obtained from local tree farm property of FUDEBIOL in Quebradas\(^{20}\), and nails.

• **Outcome:** Participants created a miniature model of a chair, as well as decorative ox carts that are commonly used as flower bases.

\(^{20}\) Quebradas is a small community located close to San Isidro.
Artistic Reutilization of Garbage Workshop

- *Origin of the Idea:* Garbage disposal is starting to be a problem within these communities. There is no collection system and, therefore, this represents a future problem for the community.

- *Purpose:* Provide children with environmental education of reutilization of garbage.

- *Focus Group:* Children.

- *Imparted by:* Roger Piedra, San Jose artist

- *Approximate number of participants:* 31

- *Materials Used:* Cans, bottles, newspaper, hot water and natural colorants.

- *Outcome:* Flower vases, pencil holders and various creative art crafts as well as the excitement of children and their interest in creating original and useful objects without needing any money.

*Figure 10*

Artistic Reutilization of Garbage
**Outcome of Workshops**

The overall outcome of these workshops, as stated by some of the participants, was an understanding and appreciation of their values and surroundings, which were expressed in the form of a community vision (which is necessary for the design of future tourism projects). Furthermore, the workshops supported their sense of being part of a community and helped them understand how they are able to use their creativity and empowerment to fight for the betterment of the community.

**4.5 Tourist Surveys**

Initially, the project was designed to survey tourists in Los Cusingos to analyse the reasons for their visit and evaluate the possibilities of future tourism projects in the region, however, given the low number of visitors, this had to be re-evaluated and Montverde was chosen to apply the survey. The main reason for choosing Montverde lies in its conservationist and research-oriented philosophy intertwined with tourism activities, however the following list presents some other reasons that supported this decision:

1. Montverde is owned and managed by the TSC, consequently shares the same conservation values and management philosophy as Los Cusingos;
2. Monteverde was considered as a role model in terms of infrastructure and services;
3. Monteverde enjoys a good reputation among nature-oriented tourists;
4. Monteverde manages large number of visitors per day consequently, a large sample size could be obtained in a short period of time; and
Conversations with Monteverde staff and TSC authorities had already taken place during the first weeks of the research; therefore consent on applying the survey to visitors was immediately approved.

An [informal hypothesis] was then formulated: If Los Cusingos was able to provide levels of satisfaction comparable to those of Monteverde, then Los Cusingos could have the potential of becoming a tourist attraction (with the support of community members). A questionnaire was designed for tourists visiting Monteverde with the purpose of defining their preferences during their visit. The following chapter contains the methodology followed for the design of the survey, how it was applied and a description of the results obtained.
CHAPTER 5: SURVEY ANALYSIS

5.1 Survey Design

After an initial pilot survey, a final questionnaire was designed. This initial questionnaire allowed me to narrow my preliminary expectations, shorten it and make it easier for respondents. As a result, modifications were made to it and the format was changed to make it look shorter and easier to read. The initial survey included questions related to service and infrastructure at the respondent’s lodging place, but it did not include the questions related to Los Cusingos nor the contact information question, which were added to the second survey.

The new questionnaire consisted of 33 structured questions, including mostly dichotomous and multiple-choice questions with only a few of these that included an open-ended choice (Appendix G, H). This type of format was chosen with the purpose of facilitating respondents to answer the questionnaire understanding that they could be tired after their hike in the reserve in addition to the fact that the majority of respondents only had a few minutes before they had to leave.

The wording used in the questionnaire was simple and encouraged the respondent to continue answering questions. Fourteen questions were multiple-response and the options were intended to be clear and easy to respond.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first one included questions directed towards identifying tourists’ preferences during their visit to Monteverde. The second part was intended to estimate how well known Dr. Skutch was among visitors as well as assessing whether or not they would be interested in visiting Los Cusingos. The third part aimed to evaluate whether Las Nubes, in its present conditions, had any
potential of attracting visitors. The last part included a couple of questions regarding the respondents’ willingness to support conservation objectives of a biological reserve, in addition to a final question asking for comments.

5.2 Application of Survey

The surveys were administered in a small rest area outside the main entrance to the reserve during the early afternoons just after tourists exit from the reserve. In all cases, potential respondents were approached with a brief introduction and explanation of the purposes of the research and then a request if they would be willing to respond to the survey. If the response was positive, a pen and a questionnaire were provided; and in the cases of families, only one questionnaire was given asking them to specify the age and gender of each member. Because tourists would come out from the reserve in groups and would remain in the resting area for a short period of time, the questionnaire had to be self-administered in order to obtain a larger sample size. However, when possible, I would administer the questionnaire myself, having a close interaction with respondents and obtaining detailed answers. On a few occasions, personnel from the reserve helped during the application of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were applied during the rainy season; this allowed people to answer the questionnaire while waiting for the rain to stop.

The research undertaken in the study region and Montverde provided valuable information that has been analysed and interpreted in the following chapter.

5.3 Results

In terms of this exploratory research, the results of the survey are discussed in a descriptive fashion including my own reflections on the experience. These
reflections are personal observations and will be expressed on a different font
(Bookman Old Style) to differentiate them from the discussion of the observed results.

**Area of Origin**

Figure 11 shows the North American market as the leader in visitation to Monteverde, with over half (55%) of the total number of visitors. European visitors comprised over one-fifth (22%); while only 16% of the surveyed visitors were Costa Ricans and only a very small proportion were Latin American or Asian. The ICT demonstrates that the main groups that visit national parks or protected areas in Costa Rica are Europeans and North Americans (Table 4). This clearly illustrates the markets to which Los Cusingos should be marketed. A comparison between Table 4 and Table 5 indicates that the results obtained from the Monteverde survey in terms of visitors’ origin, are consistent with a larger survey applied by the ICT (ICT, 2000). Moreover, the evidence from the present study suggests that further research should be carried out to understand why the Costa Rican and the Latin American groups are not larger, despite geographical proximity. It is possible that there exist income, information, or cultural factors that affect visitation from these groups. It is believed that, in order to avoid a drastic drop in tourism earnings, such as the one experienced in 2001, as well as maintaining the sustainability of a destination (in this case the study region), efforts should also consider focusing on regional markets.
Table 4
Visitation to National Parks in Costa Rica by Area of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visited a National Park</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>CANADA</th>
<th>EUROPE</th>
<th>LATIN AMERICA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICT, 2000

Table 5
Visitation to Monteverde by Area of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visited Monteverde</th>
<th>COSTA RICA</th>
<th>USA CANADA</th>
<th>EUROPE</th>
<th>L.A. CARIBBEAN</th>
<th>ASIA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (Missing cases: 1)
Age and Gender of Visitors:
Visitors’ age was categorized in three groups: young (0-25 years old), middle-aged (26-50 years old) and mature (51 and older). Of the total number of respondents, the middle-aged group was the largest (65.2%). Furthermore, in an effort to learn whether there was a relationship between gender and age of respondents visiting this type of attraction, these variables were cross-tabulated. It was found that there is no apparent association given the almost equal distribution of males and females in the three age groups (Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Young</th>
<th>Middle Aged</th>
<th>Mature</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17.4%)</td>
<td>(60.9%)</td>
<td>(21.7%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.3%)</td>
<td>(69.8%)</td>
<td>(20.9%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13.5%)</td>
<td>(65.2%)</td>
<td>(21.3%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (Missing Cases: 6)

Type of Tour
In order to differentiate the type of tour preferred by participants with respect to their age group, a cross-tabulation was carried out. The results show a stronger preference for independent travelling over package tours (Table 7), which is consistent with results obtained by the ICT (ICT, 2002). Although there was no significant association between the variables (prob.[chi sq.]=0.081), the table clearly shows a preference for independent travelling over package or other type of tour with the exception of those respondents over 51 years of age (package tour preferred).
Table 7
Type of Tour by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Package</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Age</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Montverde Survey (Missing Cases: 6)

**Source of Information**

The availability of information on destinations has changed the travelling patterns of tourists. Today, more than ever, the world is more accessible, tourists can learn about almost any place they are interested in and know that their travelling opportunities extend throughout the world (Inman, n.d.).

The sources of information that influenced respondents’ decisions to visit Monteverde were several. In most cases, more than one source was used. The results reveal what the dynamics are in terms of how people from different age ranges found out about Monteverde. In all three age groups, “Friends” was the source used most often (Table 8), which demonstrates the role that social interactions play among past and future visitors. Travel agencies were an obvious source of information; hence, its high ranking. In addition, travel books were found to be an important source of information that speaks to the reliability that these sources have in travelling decisions. Results from cross-
tabulations between these variables do not indicate any significance among them (prob. [chi sq.] = 0.226).

Table 8
Age by Source of Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Tourism Information</th>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Travel Agency</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Travel Book</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Aged</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>59.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (Missing Cases: 6)

It can be inferred from Figure 12, that middle-aged people informed themselves better about Monteverde than the other two age groups; this was anticipated given that the highest percentage of independent travellers were from this group (see Table 7). It can also be inferred that social interactions\(^{21}\) have a stronger influence than other traditional sources of information on peoples’ decisions to visit Montverde (almost 35% of the total number of respondents). This information could be used in the planning process for this and other protected areas, such as the region of study. For instance, Table 8 shows that word of mouth is definitely a strong source that apparently affects visitation

\(^{21}\) The variable “Friends” represents social interactions among tourists
numbers, what factors influence this effect and how it could be monitored, are questions that should be further analysed.

Surprisingly enough, the use of internet to define visitation among the surveyed tourists was quite low (7.8%), compared to other more conventional sources like travel agencies (17.5%) and friends (34.9%) (Table 8). It could be interpreted that there exists an ‘open window’ for developing more and better information about Monteverde on the internet, as a strategy to attract tourists who use this tool for planning their holidays. More in-depth studies are required, however, in order to make this type of inference.
In comparison, a larger study performed by the ICT found that of the total amount of tourists that visited Costa Rica for the first time, 51.3% had received recommendations by family and/or friends, 10.3% had read about it in an article, 5.8% through a travel agency, 5.3% through a travel guide (book) and only 5.1% through internet (ICT, 2000). Again, social interactions were the source used the most, and internet the least.

Figure 13 illustrates by area of origin how tourists informed themselves about Monteverde. These results could represent how promotional efforts should be distributed geographically.

Figure 13
Area of Origin by Sources of Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries by Continent</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA and Canada</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. A. and Caribbean</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and Oceania</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (Missing Cases: 1)

---

22 To facilitate analysis, five clusters were identified for each of the countries found in the survey
From my own experience while in Costa Rica, I saw that most tourists were travelling with a guidebook, particularly Lonely Planet. This type of book offers useful and reliable information on transportation, accommodation, and places to visit in specific destinations...

5.4 Monteverde

Reasons for Visit

Respondents were asked to rate their level of interest for various factors that could represent reasons to visit Monteverde (Table 9). The total number of responses for each factor, regardless of the degree of interest is as follows: General Interest in Nature [90], Birdwatching [73], Flora Observation [73], Fauna Observation [71], Ecological Awareness [70], Rest [60], Scientific Interest [59], and Study [51]. In addition, respondents were asked to rate their interest from low to high for those factors. Similarly, when rating those variables with a high level of interest, bird watching, flora and fauna observation received a very similar number of responses [41, 46 and 45 respectively]. In contrast, the variables of scientific interest and study received only a few responses in terms of high degree of interest [14 and 7]. This could be related to the argument that “tourism in general, and ecotourism in particular, are making substantial private conservation activity financially possible” (Inman, n.d. p.27)
Table 9

Reasons to Visit Montverde by Level of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason to Visit</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Interest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Interest</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birdwatching</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of Flora</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of Fauna</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Awareness</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey

Preferences

No significant relationships were found between visitors’ age and their preferences \(^{23}\), however, the results offer valuable information for this project. If Los Cusingos adopts the same quality standards as Monteverde, then satisfaction will be guaranteed, a key element for its sustainability in the future. The following paragraphs give an overview of visitors’ preferences and trends during their visit to National Parks in Costa Rica.

Length of Visit

The frequencies of this variable indicate that most visitors (57%) stayed in the reserve for a period no longer than 3 hours (Figure 14). The survey did not enquire on the

\(^{23}\) In this case, preferences were determined by the length of the visit to Monteverde, types of walks (morning/night/both/neither), opinion on maintenance of infrastructure (trails, signs, toilets, etc.), on guides, and finally, on the use of platforms.
reasons for this; however, this information will help design the logistics and variety of activities for future tourists in Los Cusingos.

In many cases, after coming out from the hike, tourists would buy some sort of snacks and refreshments at the store and eat these in the picnic area provided. Furthermore, they would visit the souvenir store and the hummingbird centre.

Figure 14
Age Range by Length of Visit

![Bar chart showing age range by length of visit]

Source: Monteverde Survey (Missing Cases: 7)
Guides

All of those respondents who hired a guide [64 responses], rated his/her services from very good to excellent. As one female participant visiting Monteverde expressed it:

“He knew a lot, very friendly, spoke great English and his Spanish was slow enough to understand”

A younger male respondent expressed it somewhat differently:

“Because he was in botany and knew his s...t”

Although no significant relationship was found between the country of origin and the use of a guide, a cross tabulation between these variables showed that 73% [46 responses] of North Americans and 52.4% [11 responses] of Europeans hired a guide (Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used a Guide by Area of Origin</th>
<th>USA and Canada</th>
<th>L.A. and Caribbean</th>
<th>Costa Rica</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia and Oceania</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hired a guide</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t hire a guide</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (Missing Cases: 5)
This reflects the demand for well-prepared and knowledgeable tour guides in a Protected Area, opening the possibilities for local people in the Las Nubes region to prepare themselves and seek new job opportunities. This would help the community to integrate with new people, while having a better understanding of the place where they live. Furthermore, this would satisfy some of the community’s needs of diversifying their current activities and sources of income.

During a night hike in Monteverde with a trained and experienced guide, I was able to see things that without her I wouldn’t have. For example, glowing mushrooms and insects that were almost imperceptible to the untrained eye. This experience was unique and recommended several people about it…

Maintenance and Entrance Fee of the Reserve

With the purpose of learning tourists’ opinion on the quality of infrastructure offered by Monteverde, they were asked to rate it from Very Good to Very Bad: 74 respondents selected Very Good, 20 chose Good and 1 chose Regular (Table 11). This clearly illustrates the excellent infrastructure facilities found at the reserve. The design and maintenance at Monteverde should be taken as a role model to be emulated.
Table 11
Rating of infrastructure in Monteverde

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintenance of Infrastructure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: Monteverde Survey (missing cases: 0)

As part of the infrastructure, platforms in strategic parts of the corridor and the sanctuary (Los Cusingos) could be added, to offer tourists a better appreciation of the landscape, framed by coffee plantations and forestland.

Providing a high quality experience through excellent infrastructure and protection of the natural environment, justifies the price that visitors have to pay as an entrance fee to Monteverde ($10.00 USD). A large number of them (51%) rated the entrance fee as adequate, while a smaller, but considerable number (21.3%) rated it as expensive, and only 5.3% rated it as very expensive (missing cases: 18).

Morning/Day Walks
Visitors in Monteverde expressed a high interest in early morning walks (Table 12), which reflects their desire in viewing fauna. Furthermore, it is easier to view wildlife during the early hours of the day and the chances of rain during the wet season24 are

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24 The survey was carried out during the beginning of the “wet season”
significantly lower in the mornings than in the afternoons. These circumstances help
determine the hours of operation of the reserve, as well as the availability of tour guides.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Walk</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Morning</td>
<td>33 42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nights</td>
<td>6 7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>50 45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12
Type of Walk

Source: Montverde Survey (missing cases: 17)

Accommodation

Tables 13 and 14 clearly show the accommodation preferences of the surveyed visitors. The tables are self-explanatory in terms of type of accommodation and amount paid per night; however, it should be understood that Monteverde has important tourism development, with a large number of high-end hotels, boutiques and art-shops that cater to tourists with a higher budget. On the other hand, there is a small number of cheaper lodges (Denis Gomez, per. comm., 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Accomodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13
Type of Accomodation

Source: Montverde Survey (missing cases: 6)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$0-10 USD</th>
<th>$11-20 USD</th>
<th>$21-40 USD</th>
<th>$41- USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Responses</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid %</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Montverde Survey (missing cases: 33)

5.5 Los Cusingos

Results from the survey reveal that a very small number of visitors (3) had any knowledge of Dr. Alexander Skutch. This suggests that although there is a clear indication of interest in bird-watching (Table 9), it could be inferred that these people might possibly be casual bird-watchers rather than experts in this sport. This is indicative of the strategy that could be implemented for the promotion of the study region; it should not use the figure of Dr. Skutch as its main attraction for general tourists; however, if the strategy is to focus on birdwatchers, then the figure of Dr. Skutch should play an important role. His heritage, along with a distinctive interpretative tour, should be used rather as supplementary support strategies that would provide the region with distinctive features, identifying it as unique from other tours in protected areas. The interest in visiting Los Cusingos was cross-tabulated with the origin of visitors (national or foreign). The results indicate that local visitors are willing to discover more about their national heritage. At the same time, it could be an indicator that foreign tourists are more interested in visiting tourist ‘hot-spots’ than smaller less popular places that could provide a questionable experience.
Table 15
Nationality by Interest to Visit Los Cusingos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest to visit Los Cusingos</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigner</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (Missing Cases: 35)

Reasons for Visit
When asked about the reasons that would motivate this visit, 15.8% [15 cases] referred to bird watching, 12.6% [12 cases] replied to experiencing alternative tours, 11.6% [11 responses] to learn from Skutch’s heritage and only 4.2% [4 cases] to study. These numbers reveal that birdwatching remains the main reason to visit; however, it was interesting to find an important number of respondents interested in experiencing an alternative tour. This should be an indicator of the consideration to be taken during the design of activities for the study region. Although no specification was made in terms of what respondents meant by an “alternative tour” this reinforces the importance of creativity for tourism destinations to be successful (Ana Baez, per. comm., 2002).

Characteristics of Visit
Of those who responded to this question (58 responses), 65.8% [25 cases] of the people preferred to visit Los Cusingos as part of a day trip, rather than including it as part
of a package tour. This is consistent with the findings of the type of tour taken to visit Costa Rica (Table 16), where 64% of the respondents indicated that they visited Monteverde independently and not as part of a tour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference on Type of Tour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Tour</th>
<th>DayTrip</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Responses</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid %</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (missing cases: 17 not asked this question)

**Preferred Type of Accommodation**

With the purpose of understanding the lodging preferences of tourists that visit protected areas, tourists were asked to choose what types of accommodation they would be willing to stay in, if they visited Los Cusingos (Table 17). Respondents could choose more than one option.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Preference Los Cusingos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Cabin</th>
<th>Local Family</th>
<th>Camping</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Responses</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid %</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey (missing cases: 17, not asked this question)
Table 18
Type of Accommodation used by tourists in Costa Rica

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel/Cabin</th>
<th>Family/Friends</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Camping</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>72.9%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICT, 2000

The justification for this question was to assess the possibilities of whether or not this type of tourist would be willing to stay at local homes in the region of study or at the cabin located in Los Cusingos or La Escondida. The results from the questionnaire indicate that tourists have a strong preference for staying at hotels and cabins, which are expected to provide certain level of comfort afforded by facilities such as hot water, safety, and private bathroom among others.

5.6 Las Nubes

The third section of the questionnaire focused on Las Nubes trying to obtain general information on what the preferences of visitors would be. The idea of including this section in the questionnaire originated from several conversations, where the possibility of attracting tourists to Las Nubes as a way of generating income that would be used for research and conservation purposes was discussed. The survey mentions that Las Nubes is a biological reserve with conservation purposes and that it has no infrastructure at all. This was made clear so that tourists could decide whether they would be willing to visit this reserve, knowing that they should not expect any signs of development on the property.

As a result, 68.8% [53 responses out of 77] of the surveyed tourists answered affirmatively to their willingness to visit the reserve.
Transportation Preferences

Knowing that getting to Las Nubes is not easy, given the distance that separates it from the closest town, the poor road conditions and the absence of human development in its surrounding areas, it was considered important to learn whether potential visitors would be willing to use less conventional or comfortable means of transportation to get there (Table 19). Respondents were able to choose more than one option. People were asked to choose from five different transportation options and to define how much time they would be willing to use each in of their selections.

Table 19
Transportation preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bus</th>
<th>4WD</th>
<th>Walk</th>
<th>Bicycle</th>
<th>Horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey

Results obtained from the cross-tabulation of the reasons to visit Las Nubes with the area of origin of visitors (Table 20), are consistent with the motivations to visit Monteverde, mainly general interest in nature and bird watching, as well as flora and fauna observation, over the other reasons listed.

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25 The options were chosen after observing which were the main transportation means in the region, which included: horse, bus, 4WD, walking and bicycle.
26 This part of the question was excluded from the analysis given that the responses suggest misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the question, therefore judged as not useful for the study.
Table 20
Motivations to Visit Las Nubes by Area of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USA and Canada</th>
<th>L.A. and Caribbean</th>
<th>Costa Rica</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia and Oceania</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bird watching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perspective</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora and Fauna observation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Interest in Nature</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monteverde Survey

Type of Support

Finally, visitors were asked if they would be willing to support the reserve (Table 21), and in which ways. The results reveal volunteer work as the preferred means to support the conservation objectives of Las Nubes; volunteering stands as the preferred option in the three age groups, although the middle-age and mature groups showed interest in contributing financially. Both types of support are critically important for Las Nubes and the biological corridor.

27 Financial contribution, volunteer work or other form. See results for other type of contribution.
Table 21
Type of support by Age Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Volunteer work</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Aged</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Montverde Survey

The results of this survey represent an initial attempt to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of Los Cusingos and Las Nubes region as a tourist destination. The sections of Los Cusingos and Las Nubes had low number of responses and some answers were incoherent, thus not eligible for analysis. Consequently, some of the results it is suggested that in order to avoid difficulties resulting from problems with the design, to reword the questionnaire and shorten it to allow tourists to answer the survey completely. However, the results do reflect tourists’ preferences when they visit a Protected Area in Costa Rica. These results are useful for the purposes of this major paper.
When I first arrived to San Jose, I was told that Las Nubes region offered no tourism potential given its remoteness, lack of infrastructure and lack of financial resources. Since I had not visited the region yet, I took this opinion seriously and was somewhat disappointed that what I thought was an interesting and important research topic, had already been analysed and discussed by stakeholders and that the final outcome was the one I was told.

However, I was determined to understand the rationale for this decision and reach an opinion based on my own findings. With this in mind, I visited the region, talked to its people, asked experts for their advice and opinion; and interviewed tourists in an effort to obtain a holistic view of the whole context.

In my opinion, the results from this exploratory research reveal the potential of Las Nubes region to support sustainable tourism endeavours as an option for locals who seek alternative activities to the ones they currently carry out. Exploring this alternative is compatible with suggestions made by previous MES students who carried out research in the same region. The continuity of research projects strengthens the value of their findings and allows for building-up knowledge that will contribute to the conservation efforts needed to ease the pressure off of the existing forest patches and to alleviate the socio-economic needs of the people of Santa Elena and Quizarrá.

As a result of the learning experience provided by this field research, I understood the complexities of trying to find a balance between social, economic and environmental needs of a specific region. All variables are equally important and course
of action should only be implemented by those who directly be affected by change (Burkey. 1993). The social structure of the communities of Santa Elena and Quizarrá is extremely fragile in the sense that because of a lack of community pride and vision (topic discussed by Christos during the workshops) they are vulnerable to external influence. However, the community meetings revealed their anxiety for change and for creating a coalition with same interests and ideals. This situation along with the personal conversations and informal interviews with several members of the communities, made me realise the impact that a tourism project would have. It was evident that people wanted to experience a change on their daily lives, and this could be provided by having a personal or an economic incentive.

Locals from Santa Elena and Quizarrá showed interest in receiving tourists in the region, however, they are not aware of the challenges and risks that this could represent if not planned carefully and accordingly to their specific situation. Good understanding of the dynamics of tourism in protected areas and community participation is needed to ensure the success of any project. This must involve the organization of public meetings, workshops and seminars directed to community members. Time and budget constraints, did not allow for further discussions with communities about tourism projects, however, the suggestions offered in this Major Paper are presented here as the final outcome obtained as a result of the analysis of interviews and tourist surveys in an effort to motivate the continuity of this project. These suggestions are an initial draft that needs to evaluated and considered by local community members and analysed by future researchers.

Several considerations were taken when thinking of the suggestions
derived from the field research experience. First, Los Cusingos is currently undergoing serious financial problems given that the cost of maintaining the reserve surpasses the profit generated by entrance fees. Second, the decline of Dr. Skutch’s health has halted most of the activities the TSC planned for the sanctuary. Third, York University’s plan on continuing the work on the tree nursery that was started this year with students and community members working together. Finally, respect for the traditional regional lifestyle found within the area.

Given the hope that tourism can generate alternative sources of income and contribute to the financial sustainability of protected areas, today Costa Rica and other developing countries are designing strategies trying to find a balance of all factors involved in the equation of sustainable tourism (Inman, C. and Segura, 1998; Hearne and Salinas, 2002; Goodwin and Roe, 2001). Therefore, in order to facilitate the achievement of sustainable tourism goals, stakeholders need to understand and incorporate tourist preferences for nature appreciation, infrastructure facilities, and other attributes of Protected Areas (Hearne and Salinas, 2001). One of the objectives of the Monteverde survey was to obtain an understanding of these preferences to be able to learn from them and apply this new knowledge into future tourism projects in Los Cusingos. Keeping in mind the intrinsic reasons why visitors decide on one site upon another, is key for the planning process of any destination that has the objective of avoiding problems related to congestion, interpretation of trails, accommodation, guides, etc. that could lead to visitors’ dissatisfaction. As such, results from the Montverde Survey reveal that visitors, regardless of their age, have a preference on guided visits that are no longer than three
hours in length. In addition, early-morning guided walks were also preferred over night walks and most visitors considered the quality of infrastructure facilities in Montverde as very good, which reveals that their expectations of quality were met. In addition, proper consideration must be paid to the fact that the surveyed visitors favour hotel accommodation over cabins, camping, and accommodation with local families. Moreover, the main reasons for their visit to Montverde were: bird watching, and flora and fauna observation; these same reasons were stated as their motivations to a possible visit to Los Cusingos and Las Nubes, which constitute the strengths of the area to attract potential nature-oriented visitors. Finally, there was a predominant tendency of supporting the conservation goals of Las Nubes through volunteer work over financial aid. Given the elevated interest in nature, and their desire to experience alternative types of tours justifies the need to offer a creative product unique and appropriate to the region that would result attractive enough for potential visitors and community members. The ability to meet visitors’ and residents’ expectations and needs will ensure the sustainability in time of the Las Nubes region as a tourist destination.

On the other hand, knowing the type of tourists that locals in the region of study would be willing to see visiting their communities facilitates the process of focusing on a specific type of tourist. Results from informal interviews reflect a desire of maintaining a traditional lifestyle with minor disturbances, except for those caused by small groups of people interested in visiting their farms. The good-nature of the residents of Santa Elena and Quizarrá revealed special interest in hosting international students with the hope of learning a new language (English was the most commonly mentioned); and those with large farms, expressed interest in offering “some sort” of tour around their property. Most
of the interviewees had never visited Los Cusingos before the community meetings; and most of them had no knowledge of the importance of Dr. Skutch’s work over the years. Although most of the interviewees agreed that the region of study would be attractive for tourists, they failed to mention more than three points of interest.

Following the principles of sustainable tourism (Inskeep, 1991), and considering tourists and community members’ preferences, this research suggests two possible alternatives for tourist ventures in the region of study. However, acknowledging the importance of community participation in the planning process of development projects, these recommendations are subject for discussion and approval of the local people and further participatory processes. The following recommendations are based on my own observations and experience during the field research. They should be reviewed and commented with community members and other stakeholders involved in regional projects related to tourism initiatives. Further research is also recommended to evaluate visitors’ sociocultural and environmental impact as well as the community’s capacity to adapt positively to the changes introduced by external visitors.

6.1 Birdwatching – Coffee Tour

Rationale

Bird watching is considered one of the fastest growing sports in the United States (Walter Odio, per. comm., 2002); and Costa Rica’s popularity as a birdwatching destination is growing fast; of the total number of tourists that visited Costa Rica in 2000, 35.9% of them went birdwatching; and although this market is still not large compared to
sun and beach tourism (72.5 %) (ICT, 2000), bird watching represents a potential tourist attraction for the region of study

No typology of birdwatchers was found in the literature review, however, it is believed that this group has low negative impact and that they offer one of the most responsible and respectful attitudes towards natural and cultural environments. Furthermore, bird watching is considered an activity that can help local economies giving residents incentives to maintain and support protected areas (Richard Garrigues, per. comm., 2002). As such, it is recommended to do further research on the potential value of this activity in the Las Nubes region in terms of the social, economic and environmental impacts and benefits that it could produce.

The region of study can offer birdwatchers the possibility of observing migratory birds from the lowlands of Los Cusingos and the highlands of Monte Chirripó. The landscape conformed by the Las Nubes mid-elevation undisturbed forest; the coffee plantations that conform the biological corridor; and the lowland forest of Los Cusingos; along with Dr. Alexander Skutch’s legacy, make the region of study unique in its landscapes, its value and in its efforts to conserve biodiversity in different ecosystems. Offering tours along the coffee farms involved in the biological corridor project can have a positive impact on farmers and tourists in their perception of the benefits that shade-grown coffee can provide.

Discussions with Walter Odio and Noel Ureña (owner and manager of San Isidro-Selvamar tour operator specialized in the South Pacific) indicated that the region of study counts with the potential of attracting bird watching tourists; especially in Los Cusingos
and La Escondida. This opinion was based on their own experience when invited to visit both farms. During their visit to Los Cusingos, they were able to observe a wider variety of birds than they initially expected and although the maintenance of the trails was somewhat poor, they believed that the conditions for a “good bird watching” tour were met. During their visit to La Escondida, they were able to experience Luis Angels’ family’s hospitality while walking through the butterfly garden and observing birds on the feeders that Luis Angel built. Although I have no recollection of the bird species they were able to observe, they mentioned that some of them had not been seen in the region recently. Both Walter and Noel are enthusiast birdwatchers and have followed Dr. Skutch’s work over the years; they had the opportunity of talking to him and buying several of his books which was, as they commented later on, a deep experience for them. Currently, Noel is organizing a Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in an area close to San Isidro and mentioned the possibility of organizing a CBC in the Las Nubes region. Furthermore, they offered the possibility of voluntarily training local people as tour guides and offered working with them in developing theirs skills to be able to provide good service to tourists. Furthermore, Walter and Noel have worked on a voluntary basis with different regional communities training them in the field of service and customer satisfaction in the tourism sector.

Description of the Suggested Tour

The combination of a bird watching and a shade-coffee-tasting tour will let visitors learn how shade-grown coffee plantations provide ecosystems for avifauna.

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28 The CBC is an Audubon Society event that organizes an early-winter survey of birds throughout the western Hemisphere.
supporting with this the migration of birds from highland to low-land ecosystems. A session offering coffee tasting from local farms will enhance and support the learning experience of the visitors. As a result, tourists will personally experience how coffee and conservation can go hand in hand.

**Tour Suggestion**

**Day A**

6:00 am  Departure from San Isidro de El General

7:00 am  Arrival to Los Cusingos

- Hiking/Birdwatching through the trails
- Visit Dr. Alexander Skutch’s house
- Lunch prepared by local people
- Discussion on a selected topic
- Free time to walk around the communities
- Visit tree nursery, lecture on forest fragmentation, biological corridors and/or shade-grown coffee

2:00 pm  Return to San Isidro

Activities in and around San Isidro

**Day B**

6:00 am  Departure from San Isidro de El General

7:30 am  Arrival to La Escondida

- Hiking/Bird watching around the trails of the farm
- Hiking/bird watching in the shade-grown coffee plantation
- Visit Butterfly Garden
- Lunch prepared by the family
- Local Coffee tasting and lecture

3:00 pm  Return to San Isidro de El General

Activities in and around San Isidro
These activities could be part of a tour that includes visits to major regional attractions such as Chirripó National Park, Marino Ballena National Park, and others. The idea of including the suggested tours with more popular alternatives, gives tourists the option of visiting and learning from a diversity of landscapes adding to the value of their trip. Using Chirripó or other popular destinations will serve as the main attraction of a tour used strategically as a way to attract visitors to the region of study.

**Suggestion for lectures/discussion**
- Shift from sun-grown to shade-grown coffee and potential benefits
- Partnerships between international academic institutions and local farmers in a common effort to promote biodiversity conservation and environmental education in the region
- Promotion and quality control of regional coffee

**Potential Benefits**
- Profits generated by entrance fees can be used for: trail maintenance, trail interpretation, tour-guide training, maintenance of Dr. Skutch’s house, administrative expenses, etc.
- Awareness of Dr. Skutch’s legacy, potential for building on community pride and interest in biodiversity conservation.
- Profits generated from sales of art crafts, food supplies, horse-rental, etc.

**Potential Risks**
- Cultural conflict between foreigners and local people
- Lack of training and preparation can lead to unsatisfactory service
• Lack of control of incoming groups could generate unwanted disturbance
• Creation of expectations in local community

**Suggested Planning Actions**

• Contact Local tour operator (Selvamar is suggested) to initiate training programs for local people.
• Support local farmers with information for their presentations.
• Organize informative material for visitors.
• Provide farmers with equipment (binoculars, bird and butterfly guides, coffee books, coffee grinder, cups, etc.) needed for the visit.
• Organize a pilot tour with the suggested activities to analyze its feasibility.
• Organization of bi-weekly meetings with community members to discuss progress of the project, questions and effects.

**6.2 International Volunteer Program**

Volunteerism is considered as a strategic tool to enhance economic and social development playing a significant role in the welfare and progress of industrialized and developing countries. Although the extent and impact of volunteer action is not easy to record, positive change in marginalized societies can be achieved reinforcing the means and capabilities of people from different parts of the society (UN, 1999).

Volunteering brings benefits to both society at large and the individual volunteer. It makes important contributions, economically as well as socially and it contributes to more cohesive societies by building trust and reciprocity among citizens.
Various North American institutions offer volunteer programs around the world, Costa Rica being one of the preferred countries for its political stability, safety, and committed efforts towards conservation (Gilberth Fallas, Jose Ramirez per. comm., 2002). Developing a volunteer program in the Las Nubes region with the participation of academic institutions will provide communities with information; cultural exchange and much needed labour work as well as financial benefits. During the field research in Costa Rica, I had the opportunity of visiting two projects that reached their completion thanks to the support received from international and local volunteers. Las Quebradas, in particular, has integrated the local community with the project by offering educational programs, training and employment. Much of the work done in Las Quebradas has been product of the labour of international volunteers (most of them high school students) that stay with local families in the community. The students are engaged to carry out assigned daily activities or projects such as painting or building trails. In some cases, volunteers have applied their skills and knowledge for tasks requiring a higher level of work. I had the opportunity of spending two days with a group of American students and observe their attitude towards the work that had to be carried out as well as their behaviour with their “families”. In addition, I talked to two local women who were hosting students and indicated that the experience had been positive for the family economically, but most importantly because they had the experience of learning from another culture.

Although the effects of voluntary action can vary according to the participants' reasons for volunteering, their perceptions of the work they do, and the community’s reaction to their presence, I believe that designing a volunteer program in
Las Nubes Region could provide significant benefits to the communities. However, the project has to be carefully designed to minimize the risk of creating negative effects within the community.

**Potential Benefits:**
- Cultural exchange and learning with a foreign culture
- Economic profits
- Local pride
- Labour work
- Learning new alternatives to sustainable land-use practices, educational exchange

**Potential Risks:**
- Introduction of diseases
- Negative cultural impact
- Invasion of privacy
- Alterations to everyday activities

**Suggested Strategy**
After selecting a number of houses with appropriate facilities (running water, extra bedroom, kitchen, electricity) a pilot group of students could stay in these houses while doing volunteer work in the tree nursery initiated by York University’s students. A designated group leader with a knowledge of the priorities to be covered during the students’ visit would head this group. This leader should have knowledge of Costa Rican culture, should know the area and host families, and should have first-aid training as well as good understanding of Spanish. The fee would include the following:
• Accommodation (private bedroom with bed)
• Three home-made meals
• Laundry
• Entrance-fee to Los Cusingos Bird Sanctuary
• Visit to Parque Nacional Marino Ballena
• Group Leader
• Ground transportation San Jose-San Isidro-San Jose
• Visit to La Escondida model coffee plantation
• Coffee-tasting tour

The obligations of the students would be:
• “X” amount of hours of daily work
• House chores including helping in the kitchen
• Follow instructions from group leader

Possible Projects to be undertaken:
• Identification of animal and plant species (particularly avifauna)
• Art projects
• Interpretation of trails
• Educational workshops
• Monitoring illegal tree-logging and hunting
• Sustainable agriculture practices (organic farming, permaculture, etc.)
Requirements:

- Minimum age: 18 years old
- Minimum commitment: Two weeks
- Minimum Spanish level: Basic conversational
- Knowledge or interest in: Conservation, ecology, community development among other related topics.
- Be a student at an academic institution in Canada

Expected Outcome:

- Continuation and completion of local existing projects (sustainable agricultural practices, release of tepezcuintles to their natural environment, illegal logging monitoring, environmental education, etc.)
- Support to local economies

**Suggested planning actions:**

- Select various households in the region eligible to provide the minimum required comfort
- Provide advice/training to selected households (cultural impact, open-mindedness, basic English, hygienic cooking, etc.)
- Make a list of projects to be undertaken with the time frames that each one requires
- Support York University students to join the project
- Train and select group leaders (Language, first-aid, leadership, problem-solving, etc.)
- Select a local leader to support students while they visit the region
In conclusion, I believe that introducing a carefully selected type of tourism in the Las Nubes region, and incorporating recreational activities (i.e. bird watching, volunteer program) with the new farming practices taking place in the biological corridor has the potential to increase diversification and sustainability of the natural resources while providing benefits for the local communities.
Appendix A: Examples of Global efforts for Sustainable Tourism

- **World Conference on Sustainable Tourism**, Lanzarote, Spain, 1995. The Charter for Sustainable Tourism was issued from this conference. This document includes a number of recommendations for the adoption of sustainability criteria in the development of tourism in the world.

- **Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry**: Action programme developed by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) along with the Earth Council. This document translates Agenda 21 into an action programme for the Travel and Tourism sector. It aims to help government departments as well as tourism related organisms to fulfill their potential to achieve sustainable development.

- **Convention for the Establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Zone**: Member countries agree to integrate their destinations within the zone and maintain certain standards, minimum criteria and values of sustainability.

- **Blue Flag Certification Program**: Developed for beaches in which these have to comply with a series of strict and specific criteria such as water quality, cleanliness and security.

- **Indicators of Sustainable Tourism**: Developed by the WTO with the purpose of facilitating the development of indicators for tourist destinations (WTO, 1994)

- **Green Globe 21**: Initiative developed by the WTTC, that “seeks to provide an action programme for sustainable tourism” (WTO, 1995)

- **Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)**: Certification program developed by Ministry of Tourism of Costa Rica. It focuses on existing tourism infrastructure rather than new developments encouraging businesses to work with regional authorities.
# Appendix B: Infrastructure at Los Cusingos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>Built Infrastructure</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Recreational Opportunities</th>
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</table>
| Los Cusingos | • *Skutch’s House*: Built in the early 1940’s with regional materials. It has several rooms including a dining room, kitchen and library  
• *Cabin*: Located at a higher elevation, two bedrooms, with a capacity to accommodate eight people. A common area lies between both bedrooms and has a kitchen area.  
• *Multiple-Use Room*: Built with the purpose of providing the community with a place to host meetings.  
• *Public restrooms*: Located close to the multiple-use room.  
• *Visitor Centre*: Small in size (Approximately 10 sq. metres), it was built with the purpose of displaying and selling souvenirs. Currently, it remains closed.  
• *Guard’s House*: Located 200 metres from the main entrance. It is the first built structure at sight.  
• *Dirt road*: Goes from the entrance to the visitor centre.  
• *Parking area*: Located adjacent to the guard’s house and to the visitor centre.  
• *Trail System*: Four trails in low degree of maintenance conditions. | *Dr. Skutch’s heritage; large stone with indigenous carvings; primary and secondary Premontane Wet Forest; avifauna diversity; protection of the watershed.* | *Birdwatching; Hiking; Flora and fauna observation; photography; camping; picnic; Environmental education; bathing in the river; Dr. Skutch’s house; rest; lodging.* |
Appendix C: Questions for Informal Interviews: Tourism Sect

Introduction

Description of the Project

1. Does Sustainable Tourism Exist?

2. Does the South Pacific region of the country have a potential for developing sustainable tourism/agrotourism/community tourism?

3. What are the expectations of ecotourists that visit the country?

4. What type of activities do you suggest should be implemented to support community development/involvement in tourist activities?

5. What are the main threats that tourism can bring into local economies?

6. How has the ICT supported community-based tourism projects?

7. How is this institution supporting community-based or nature tourism?
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<td>• True nature enthusiasts have started to disappear</td>
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Appendix E: Questions for Informal Interviews: Communities

GENERAL

• How many people live here?
• What are their occupations?
• What do the other family members do?
• How long have you lived here?
• How many rooms does the house have?
• Is there hot water?
• Do you use the fruits for your own consumption? Do you sell them?
• What type of crops do you have?
• How big is the property?
• What other activities take place in the farm? (cattle, …)
• Have you ever received guests? - Where do they stay?

TOURISM RELATED
• Would you like to see some type of tourism development in the region (hotels, lodges, boutiques, etc.)
• If the answer was negative, then… would like to see tourists visiting the region? (no major infrastructure changes)
• If the answer to the previous question was affirmative… then what type of tourist would you like to see (options: international students, families with/without children, mature people, independent travellers, or groups)
• What places would you recommend visitors to go to?

• What do you think needs to be improved?

• What do you know about Alexander Skutch?

• Have you ever visited Los Cusingos?

• Would you consider any type of training in order to provide service to tourists?

• What type of services would you be willing to provide?

• Would you be willing to host an international student in your home?

• Why do you think he/she would like to stay at your house?

• If response was positive: What would you expect from their visit?

• If response was negative:
  
  o Would you like to see foreigners staying in the town?

  o Would you feel they could threaten your lifestyle and values?

  o What changes do you think you would have to make in you every day life?
Appendix F: Interview Contacts

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*Monteverde Cloudforest Preserve*  
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http://www.butterflygardens.co.cr/

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Appendix G: Monteverde Survey-Spanish

Estimado visitante, el Centro Científico Tropical y la Universidad de York en Canadá, agradecen el tiempo y comentarios dedicados a este cuestionario que tiene como objetivo principal apoyar la conservación y el desarrollo comunitario de la región además de la mejora de las instalaciones y servicios del Santuario.

País de Origen: ___________   Fecha: ___________________
Edad: ________________   Sexo: _____ M _____ F

I. INFORMACION GENERAL
   I.I Qué tipo de tour tomó para visitar Monteverde?
      _____ Paquete      _____ Independiente      _____ Otro
   I.II Cuantas noches permanecerá en Monteverde y en Costa Rica?
      _____ Monteverde   _____ en Costa Rica
   I.III Cuantas personas le acompañan en su viaje?
      _____ adultos      _____ niños
   I.IV Cómo se enteró de Monteverde?
      _____ Internet     _____ Agencia de Viajes
      _____ Oficina de Información Turística  _____ Amigos
      _____ Revista       _____ Otro
   I.V Cuales fueron las razones principales de su viaje a Monteverde (1 siendo el nivel mas bajo de interes y 3 el mas alto)
      Interés general en la naturaleza
      Interés científico
      Observación de aves
      Observación de flora
      Observación de fauna
      Adquisición de conciencia ecológica
      Descanso
      Estudio
      Otro (especificar)

II. SERVICIOS
   II.I La duración de su visita a Monteverde fue de:
      _____ hrs.
   II.II Hubiera considerado caminatas de madrugada o nocturnas para una mejor apreciación de la fauna?
      Madrugada: _____ Si      _____ No
      Nocturna:     _____ Si      _____ No
   II.III Hubiera preferido plataformas o escondites para una mejor apreciación de la fauna?
      _____ Si      _____ No
II.IV El guía fue atento a sus preguntas e informativo en sus respuestas?

_____ Si     _____ No     _____ No contraté guía

II.V El mantenimiento de las instalaciones de la Reserva fue:

_____ Muy bueno     _____ Bueno     _____ Regular     _____ Malo     _____ Muy malo

II.VI El precio de la entrada fue:

_____ Barato     _____ Adecuado     _____ Caro     _____ Muy Caro

II.VII Usted cree que la tarifa de entrada deba incluir alguno de los siguientes?

_____ Show de diapositivas

_____ Guía

_____ Almuerzo

_____ Otro

__________________________________________________________

_____ Prefiero pagar por separado cada servicio

III. ALOJAMIENTO

III.I Su estancia fue en:

Nombre de la Población: ________________________________________________

_____ Hotel     _____ Albergue     _____ Renta de casa o habitación     _____ Otro

III.II El precio promedio que pagó por noche fue de:

De _____ a _____ dólares

III.III Quedó satisfecho con las instalaciones del lugar en que se hospedó?

_____ Si     _____ No

III.IV Le fue proporcionada información ecológica del área?

_____ Si     _____ No

III.V Se le informó de los esfuerzos que lleva a cabo el lugar para la protección y conservación del medio ambiente?

_____ Si     _____ No

IV. LOS CUSINGOS

IV.I Sabe quien es el Dr. Alexander Skutch?

_____ Si     _____ No

IV.II Le interesaría conocer Los Cusingos, un Santuario de Aves Neotropicales, donde el Dr. Skutch ha vivido por los últimos 40 años?

_____ Si     _____ No

IV.III Si la respuesta a la pregunta anterior fue afirmativa, qué razón motivaría esta visita?

_____ Conocer la vida y obra del Dr. Skutch

_____ Conocer tours alternativos

_____ Observación de aves

_____ Otro

IV.IV Que prefiere, que esta visita forme parte de un tour o que sea visita de un solo día?

_____ Parte de un tour     _____ Visita de un día

IV.V Cuánto estaría dispuesto a pagar de entrada? _____ Dólares
IV.VI Que servicios esperaría encontrar? _______________________________________

IV.VI Cuánto tiempo estaría dispuesto a quedarse en este lugar?  _____ días

IV.VII Durante su visita a esta región, que tipo de alojamiento utilizaría?
_____ Tienda de campaña  _____ Cabina  _____ Otro  ______
_____ Hotel  _____ Casa de familias locales

V. RESERVA BIOLOGICA
Este proyecto tiene como finalidad conocer la posible demanda de Las Nubes, una reserva biológica propiedad de la Universidad de York, que, junto con el CCT procura la compra de más tierra con fines de conservación y protección.

V.I Le gustaría visitar Las Nubes, una Reserva Biológica sin infraestructura alguna?  _____ Si  _____ No

V.II Qué distancia / tiempo estaría dispuesto a recorrer desde San José?
_____ km.  _____ hrs (en bus)

V.III Cuánto tiempo estaría dispuesto a viajar en cada uno de los siguientes tipos de transporte a partir de un punto dado?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tiempo máximo (ida y vuelta)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caballo  _____ hrs. _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4WD  ____ hrs.  Bicicleta  _____ hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buseta  ____ hrs. Caminata  _____ hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V.IV Cuánto estaría dispuesto a pagar por esta visita?
De  _____ a  ______ dólares

V.V Qué razón motivaría esta visita?
_____ Interés general  _____ Visión diferente del Medio Ambiente
_____ Observación de aves  _____ Observación de flora / fauna
_____ Estudio  _____ Otra

V.VI Que esperaría de esta visita?
_____ Aislamiento de otros turistas  _____ Mejor apreciación de la naturaleza
_____ Contribuir a su protección  _____ Alternativas para la observación de flora y fauna
_____ Otra ___________________________________________________________

VI. Y POR ULTIMO...

VI.I Estaría dispuesto a apoyar la misión y los objetivos de conservación de esta reserva?  _____ Si  _____ No

VI.II De que forma?
_____ apoyo económico  ____ trabajo voluntario  ____ otro ____________________
Dear visitor, we, at the Tropical Science Center (TSC) and York University, Canada, will appreciate your time and comments resulting from this questionnaire so that we may continue to improve on our conservation and communal development projects.

Age: ____________     Gender: _____ M  _____ F
Country of origin: ___________________  Date: ______________________

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

I.I What of the following type of tours did you take for your visit to Costa Rica?
   _____ Package _____ Independent       _____ Other

I.II How many nights will you stay in Costa Rica?
   ______ nights

I.III How many people are travelling with you?
   ______ adults       ______ children

I.IV How did you find out about Monteverde?
   _____ Internet    _____ Travel Agency
   _____ Tourist Information Office _____ Friends
   _____ Magazine       _____ Other ____________

I.V Which are the reasons that brought you to Monteverde? (1, 2, 3… 1 being the highest and 3 being the least)

General Interest in Nature
Scientific interest
Bird Watching
Observation of flora
Observation of fauna
Ecological awareness
Rest
Study
Other (please specify)

II. SERVICES

II.I The length of your visit was of:
   _____ hrs.

II.II Would you consider early morning or night walks for a better appreciation of fauna?
   Early morning: _____ Yes       _____ No
   Night: _____ Yes       _____ No

II.III Would you prefer platforms or hideouts for a better appreciation of nature?
   _____ Yes       _____ No

II.IV Was your guide informative and attentive to your questions?
   _____ Yes       _____ No  _____ I didn’t use the services of a guide
II.V The maintenance of the Reserve was
____ very good     _____good     _____fair     _____bad     _____ very bad

II.VI The entrance fee was:
____ cheap     _____ adequate     _____ expensive     _____ very expensive

II.VII Do you think the entrance fee should include any of the following?
____ Slide show
____ Guide
____ Lunch
____ Other ____________________________

III. LODGING

III.I Name of the community or town where you stayed ____________________________

III.II The average price you paid per night ranged:
From _____ to _____ US dollars

III.III Were you satisfied with the facilities at this place?
____ Yes     _____ No

III.IV Did they offer you any ecological information regarding the area?
____ Yes     _____ No

III.V Did they inform you on the activities they undertake for the protection and conservation
of the environment?
____ Yes     _____ No

IV. LOS CUSINGOS

IV.I Do you know who Dr. Alexander Skutch is?
____ Yes     _____ No

IV.II Would you be interested in visiting Los Cusingos, the place where Dr. Skutch has
resided for the last 40 years?
____ Yes     _____ No

IV.III If your answer to the last question was yes, what would motivate this visit?
____ Understanding the life and heritage of Dr. Skutch
____ Experience alternative tours
____ Bird-watching
____ Study
____ Other ____________________________

IV.IV Would you prefer this visit as part of a tour or as a day trip?
____ part of tour     _____ day trip

IV.V How much would you be willing to pay for entrance fee?
____ US Dollars

IV.VI What services would you expect from the Sanctuary?
_______________________________________________________________
IV.VIII How long would you be interested in staying at this place?
_____ days

IV.VIII What type of accommodation would you be willing to use?
_____ Camping
_____ Hotel
_____ Cabin
_____ Stay with host families
_____ Other ________________________________________________________

V. BIOLOGICAL RESERVE
This study analyses the possibility of promoting Las Nubes, a Biological Reserve near Los Cusingos. Las Nubes is property of York University and with the TSC is trying to acquire more land with conservation and research objectives.

V.I Would you be willing to visit Las Nubes, a biological reserve without no infrastructure?
_____ Yes     _____ No

V.II How much would you be willing to pay for an entrance fee?
From _____ to ______ US dollars

V.III What would motivate you to do this visit?
_____ General Interest      _____ Bird watching
_____ Study               _____ Different perspective of natural environment
_____ Observation of F and F   _____ Other ________________________________________________________

V.IV What distance / time would you be willing to travel from San José?
_____ km.
_____ hrs (by bus)

V.V How much time would you be willing to spend on the following types of transportation in order to get to the biological reserve from a given point?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Time (round trip)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>____ hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4WD</td>
<td>____ hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking</td>
<td>____ hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>____ hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>____ hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V.VI What would your expectations be regarding this visit?
_____ Isolation from other tourists
_____ Better appreciation of nature
_____ Contribute to its protection
_____ Alternatives for the observation of flora and fauna
_____ Other ________________________________________________________

VI. FINALLY...

VI.I Would you be willing to support the mission and conservation objectives of this biological reserve?
_____ Yes     _____ No

VI.II In which way?
_____ financial contribution   _____ volunteer work
_____ other ____________________
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